

DIIGWANDAK: STORIES FROM A GWICH'IN

LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

By

ALLAN J. HAYTON

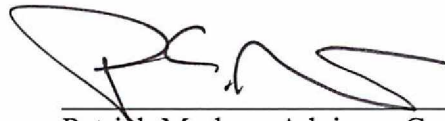
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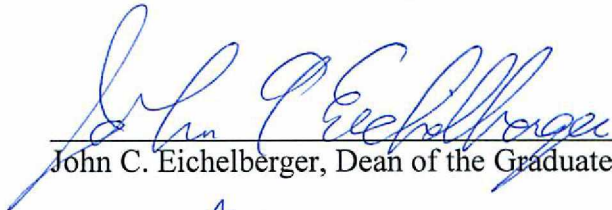


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DIIGWANDAK: STORIES FROM A GWICH'IN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

A
THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This study describes a semester in an Indigenous language high school classroom during the spring of 2011. The goal of this research is to capture the experiences of a novice Indigenous language teacher, and his students. High and low points are shared as the researcher seeks to find his place in the work of Indigenous language revitalization, and students strive to learn a second language. Data for this qualitative research was collected through teacher auto-ethnographic journal entries, lesson plans, student journals and projects, exit interviews with students, and two recorded classroom observations. Emergent themes of Time, Responsibility, Community, Fluency, Emotions, and Self-Doubt capture significant moments in the classroom, and reveal close connections between teacher and student experiences. The purpose of conducting this research is to provide insights for novice Indigenous language teachers into their classroom dynamics. The researcher also discovered areas of possible future research for Indigenous language teaching and learning.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Ihtsal dai', Vashraji K'oo gwiriich'i'. Zhat dai' khaiits'a' gwanaa dinjii naii datthak oodee Dachanlee gwa'an vadzaih eenjit nagaazhrii. Shii ts'a' shahan dinjii leji haa oodee gwa'an neerihidal. Drin doq gwandaa zhat tr'eelk'i' tl'ee "Ako' t'ee Vashraji K'oo diizheh naroo'oo." shahan shahnyaa. "Nanh aii shehndaa neeheenkhaa, ts'a' shii aii natai hihshyaa." Oodee ddhah kat gwats'an yeendaa Vashraji K'oo gwiinzii gwaal'in, gwats'a' niinyut. Sheechii t'inyaa ts'a' deegwilkhan Vashraji K'oo gwats'a' nihdik. Tr'oochit hee aii taii zhyaa gwizhrih goo'aji, gaa niyut kwaa ts'a' shaa tr'igweendaii nagwaanaii. Tr'al tee nehshrit ihshyaa. "Ni'ee, dzaa k'ii'an lee t'oonch'yaa?" vaalkat, gaa shats'a' ginkhii kwaa. Ijuk datthak zhyaa gwilii ihshyaa googaa reh shadrai hahchii kwaa ts'a' shatai needik.

When I was small, we lived in Arctic Village. At that time people would go up to Dachanlee [Mountain] in the fall time to hunt caribou. My mom and I traveled up there. After we had been there four days or so, she said "Let's go back to our house in Arctic Village. You will walk ahead of me and I will follow." From on top of that mountain I could look down and see Arctic Village below, some 20 miles distant. It made me happy that she gave me this job, and I hurried down the trail towards home. At first the trail was clear to see, but it wasn't too long before I had lost my way. I struggled through the brush. "Is this the right way?" I asked, but she did not speak to me. She made no response and followed silently behind me wherever I went.

Introduction

This story from my childhood has served as a point of reference throughout my life. In the story we see the two archetypes: that of a learner, and that of a teacher. In this thesis I will

return again to this story to discuss learner and teacher roles from different perspectives. In order to teach me how to do for myself, my mother allowed me to get completely lost and to the point of tears before assisting and leading us home. From that day forward, whenever we were out on the land it became my job to lead the way home. Whether we were picking berries, climbing a mountain, or checking rabbit snares, she was always giving gentle reminders as we traveled: “Notice the landscape. Which tree stands out? What lakeshore are we passing? Do you notice that hill in relation to the mountains? You make sure and watch where we are going.” Later I could retrace our path and find a way safely home.

When I have been lost in an unfamiliar city like New York or Amsterdam this story has reminded me to be aware of my surroundings and find my way to where I need to be. There have also been other times in my life where I have been lost in a spiritual sense, struggling within my mind or my soul, and again I could recall this story and what my mother taught me. My mother was a good teacher. She knew that she could not always be with me in every situation through life, and there were certain things I needed to be able to do for myself.

I am a novice teacher of our Gwich'in language, as well as a continuing learner. The experience of trying to teach young people our language has been one of the most challenging things I have ever attempted in my life. I have often felt lost as far as how to teach while I myself am still learning many things about our Gwich'in language. To add to this my mom passed away during the course of the semester I was teaching and collecting my research data. It was a sudden and unexpected blow, and it made finishing the semester and later writing up my research very difficult. When you lose someone close to you, the void they leave behind can create a sense of meaninglessness that makes continuing on with life a challenge. I had to find my way, and the only way to do that was to write. And so in this thesis, as in the story, she is silently following behind me... in each chapter, in my teaching and in my life.

Rationale

For this thesis I have focused my research on the different experiences I had as a novice teacher of an Indigenous language, in the hopes that what I have learned might be of use to others who are beginning to teach their own languages. The unique challenges novice language teachers face, as well as the particular obstacles to the teaching of Indigenous languages, are of great interest to me and to others in the field of language learning and teaching, especially given the endangered state we find our languages in today. I am also interested in how traditional storytelling might be used as a way to enhance language teaching, and how technology can engage young people in the language classroom. As we gain understanding, it is important to be able to share the things we have learned to assist others. In this thesis I intend to:

- Examine my own teaching for areas of improvement
- Investigate student experiences in the language classroom
- Explore traditional storytelling and technology as avenues to enhance second language learning

Novice teachers need to be aware that other teachers experience many of the same challenges when they are just starting out in the classroom. As a novice teacher there are times I might be unaware of what my needs are, what the needs of students are, and therefore unaware of how to remedy problems as they arise. It is important to know what your needs are as a teacher, and to always look for areas to grow. Introspection can be a difficult path because we may not always like what we see. But the way we grow in life is through adversity and challenging ourselves to step beyond our comfort zones. It is only then that we can experience the most significant growth.

Understanding student experiences as learners can inform how a teacher chooses to structure the classroom, deliver lessons, assess outcomes, and better engage students in the

learning experience. I wanted to have my class be one where student input was valued and sought out. I felt that there were advantages to having a learner-centered classroom, including increasing student engagement and involvement. If student input is sought out in the language classroom it can increase their investment in what they are learning. How I went about including student input was not always perfect, but the process I chose helped me develop as a teacher.

My undergraduate studies were in theatre and film, and I spent many years working as an actor, director, and playwright. I also understood from growing up with traditional Gwich'in elders, that storytelling is an important part of the way these elders would teach young people. I wanted to see if I could employ both traditional and contemporary storytelling in my language classroom, but I had to first learn how languages are best taught and learned to be able to put those experiences to use. The reason I conducted this research was to understand how I can better engage students in the classroom, how to improve my abilities as a teacher, and to share these experiences with other novice teachers who are considering, or have already entered into language education.

Research Questions

The research for this thesis was conducted in the spring of 2011 as I taught Gwich'in language at Effie Kokrine Charter School. The research questions I proposed are:

1. How does a novice teacher experience teaching Gwich'in as an additional language in a High School class?
2. How do students experience learning Gwich'in as an additional language?

My first question entails the many different types of happenings in the classroom, some of which I might control, but also many of which are simply a part of the way life in the

classroom unfolds. The novice teacher is naturally going to encounter many ups and downs in their learning process. Some days it seems like all is well in the universe, and you are doing exactly what you should be doing with your life; you have found your calling and are doing it to perfection. Then there are the other days where you wonder at your sanity when you made the choice to become a teacher. What I have discovered in the short time I have taught is that there is no right and wrong way to teach that works for everyone. Teaching is largely an individual and subjective undertaking, i.e. what works for you will not work for everyone else, and vice versa. Every teacher has to develop an approach that works best for them and their students.

My second question has to do with experiences young people have as they seek to learn a second language. Student perspectives on language learning are important, especially for teachers trying to understand how to improve the learning process, and can inform and shape the design of courses to meet student needs and various learning styles. Students can be active collaborators in the classroom, and can offer very important insights into instruction delivery, processing the lessons, and also assessment of their own learning. I utilized a similar approach for data collection as above, i.e. student journals, interviews, and a class project. Some of the student themes and sub-themes overlapped with the themes from my journal entries, including emotions, responsibility, fluency, and technology.

Theoretical Frameworks

I have used constructivism as the underlying theory to my research. According to Cooper (1993) “constructivism is a theory of learning and approach to education that lays emphasis on the ways that people create meaning of the world through a series of individual constructs. Constructs are the different types of filters we choose to lay over our realities to change our reality from chaos to order.” Von Glaserfeld (1989) says “this theory of education

seeks to provide students with first-hand experiences in learning environments and gives students opportunities to affect that environment and acquire new knowledge.” A Constructivist framework was the best fit for what I was seeking to accomplish by using digital storytelling in my classroom. I hoped that stories would help students create structure and meaning as they are learning the Gwich’in language. And by using a hands-on digital storytelling project students are able to have some control over their own learning process.

I decided to employ a qualitative study design using an autoethnographic approach and collecting data via my own daily teacher journal. This journal was then analyzed and the data grouped into emergent themes and subthemes. Some of the themes included Time, Responsibility, etc., and the subthemes were related to *emotions*, *fluency*, and *student engagement*, among others. Students also kept journals in which they recorded what they learned in class that day, what they enjoyed, what they found difficult, and any other thoughts or feelings that they might have. I was able to create a dialogue with each of them by responding to their entries, answering their questions, and asking them questions myself. Student themes were revealed to have some overlap themes from my data. Other sources of data include two videotaped classroom observations, lesson plans, student digital storytelling projects, and exit interviews with students.

Limitations

This present study seeks to answer questions that were of personal interest to me, but it does not prescribe a method or methods for second language instruction. This thesis is an exploration of my curiosities around how second languages are taught and learned. I hope my experiences and what I learned from students can be useful for other novice Indigenous language teachers who may be feeling overwhelmed, lost, frustrated, overjoyed, elated... any

and all myriad emotions surrounding the revitalization of our endangered languages. Our languages are important even if the messages from dominant society tell us otherwise. Hopefully there will be something within this thesis that will be of use for the novice teacher, and help them along their educational journey.

Summary

When I come to the end of my life, I would like to look back and be able to say confidently that I made a positive contribution to Gwich'in language and culture. I do not want to have been a passive onlooker as our language flickered out and died, but someone who stirred the fire and kept it going for the next generations. For a minority language to endure it takes more than any one individual effort and requires the collective conviction of the entire speech community. I was fortunate to grow up at a time when there were many speakers, and I was able to gain ability in the language as a result. I would not consider myself a master of the language, as there is still much for me to learn. But at 42 years of age at the time of this research, I am on the younger end of speakers in the language. I would like to see those younger than me begin to use and make the language their own.

I left for college at the age of 17, finished a BA in theatre and film at the University of Kansas, and spent some twenty years working as an actor, playwright, and director. I do not regret the life choices I made because I was enriched by the experiences of pursuing my education, working in the theatre, collaborating with many excellent artists, traveling far and wide, and finding mentors along the way. In sum I learned a great deal about what it means to be a human being in the process. While I am proud of what I have accomplished, my work was largely “out in the world” and almost none of it made any difference “back home” with the state of our Gwich'in language.

That began to change when I decided to become personally involved. I began teaching Gwich'in in 2009, first at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and then at Effie Kokrine Charter School, the setting of this study. Along the way there have been high and low points for me as a teacher, and with my students in their effort to learn the language, but we try to always move in a positive direction. I continue looking for the keys that will begin to unlock the language for them. There is nothing better than to see the light go on as a student discovers something. Once they realize they have the power to learn, they can begin to explore and discover the language for themselves. It is my hope that by bringing my love of theatre together with my love of Gwich'in language I will be able to interest learners to pursue their language and keep it alive for future generations.

In the following chapters I will discuss my literature review, methodology, analysis, findings, and possible implications for other novice language teachers in their classrooms. The Chapter 2 Literature Review is a tour through the research relevant to my research questions. In Chapter 3 I will discuss my methodology, the research design I used, participants and setting, and how I collected and analyzed my data. In Chapter 4 I will discuss how the data I collected addresses my research questions. My data is organized into the themes of Responsibility, Time, and Technology Highs & Lows. And lastly in Chapter 5 I will share my conclusions as well as possible areas for future research.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

‘Dinjii neekwajii sheeghaii gaadii aii goginjik eeshagahtan. Aii ch’ihlak cheendak tl’ee chan ch’ihlee ch’izhii reh, neekwajii najii...’ Akwat Tl’oo Thal, Grass Pants, lyaa zhyaa vanoodlit gidiinth’ak, vanoodlit ginjik datthak diith’ak dhidlit. Izhik ree vanoodlit k’yaa goots’a’ ginkhii. ‘Deenyaa t’inyaa li’?’ ree varahnyaa! Zhyaa kii lira’ee k’it’inyaa ree giyahnyaa.

‘Two men sat beside me and they taught me their language. When one got tired of it, the other one did it...’ Now Tl’oo Thal, Grass Pants, really understood the white men, he really became able to understand the white man’s language completely. He spoke the White people’s language to them... ‘I wonder what he’s saying?’ people said! They said he spoke just as if rocks were grinding together.”

~Moses Peter, Tl’oo Thal, in McGary (1984, pp. 814-835)

Tl’oo Thal was a Gwich’in man living in the 1840s, and the first Alaskan Gwich’in to encounter Europeans. In the story, Tl’oo Thal is out hunting and by chance he meets fur traders from the Hudson Bay Trading Company. Tl’oo Thal is treated roughly, he is dragged to a stump and his long hair chopped with an axe. They strip Tl’oo Thal head to toe of all his possessions... his knife, bow and arrow, fire starter, canoe, and his clothing are all destroyed and replaced with items from the traders. Even his name was changed. What he was called before this encounter we do not know, but the name we know him by today, Tl’oo Thal or Grass Pants, is taken from the canvas garment he received from the traders. The canvas material is made from cotton, which Gwich’in people would have called tl’oo (grass). Tl’oo Thal

(McGary, 1984) spent years living among the traders, learning their language, and he began a new livelihood as an interpreter for the Hudson Bay Company.

The story of Tl'oo Thal is a first contact story that is not uncommon among tribes of North America, and even around the world. Most other tribes have each had their own Tl'oo Thal, and the story that unfolded after that first contact often played out in much the same way. What we see in the story of Tl'oo Thal is the first incursion of what would be a huge upheaval for Gwich'in people. It is the story of the beginning of language and cultural shift from Gwich'in to English. Tl'oo Thal's experience of having his world stripped away is a story on an individual scale, a story that would be repeated on a societal scale among Gwich'in people.

While the big picture of language shift and its underlying causes is a complex issue, and is a huge area of study in its own right (see Crawford, 1995, 1996, 2000; Fishman, 1991; Hinton & Hale 2001; McCarty, 1998, 2001, 2002; Watahomigie & McCarty, 1996), I am choosing to focus my discussion in this literature review on 1) the role of schools historically in hastening language shift in the first place, and 2) where they might (hopefully) become places where endangered languages can begin to gain new generations of speakers. Following my discussion on the role of schools, I will look at the literature on the role of teachers and learners in the second language classroom, and the role of story and technology in teaching second languages. While schools are only a piece of the puzzle for revitalizing endangered languages, and maybe not even the biggest piece, the setting of my current study is a Gwich'in High School classroom where I am seeking to understand how I might be most effective as a language teacher.

The Role of Schools

Historically schools have been a double-edged sword for Native Americans. Schools and schooling have most often been used as a tool for the eradication of Indigenous languages

and cultures (Beaulieu, Sparks, & Alonzo, 2005; Hinton & Hale, 2001). After Alaska was acquired from Russia in 1867, The Organic Act of 1884 established local civilian government in Alaska. Sheldon Jackson was appointed General Agent of Education for Alaska. Jackson established boarding schools in Wrangell, Sitka, and Haines. Jackson was opposed to education in Alaska Native languages, “Instruction in their vernacular is not only of no use to them but is detrimental to their speedy education and civilization” (Alton 1998, p. 13). The goal was to Westernize Alaska Native students in preparation for becoming a part of mainstream society.

At the same time, many Alaska Native people saw schools as a vehicle that would help provide a better future for their children. Faced with a world that was changing around them, Gwich'in people began to create schools on their own rather than wait for government entities to do it for them. Johnny Frank speaking to then Chief Ned Roberts:

“Łyâa akòo diindhan jì’ eenjit dzaa jùk yeedì’ kwantee hii’al ts’à’ t’ee *school* zheh tr’agwahahtsyaa” vaihnyàa. “Jaghahi *government* vaa deegwadqoh’ài gwaqł’in kwaa” vaihnyàa. Dzaa gwich’in naii *government* k’it’iinch’yaa ts’à’ kwaiik’it shrigwiheelyaa geenjit gwitr’it’agwah’in... Kwàt jùk khyah t’arah’in k’iighai’ shih tr’aakhwajj k’iighai’ gwizhrih ch’ar’a’aa tr’iilk’ii. Dinjii Zhuh tr’inlji ts’à’ reh. Łyâa early days gwats’an tr’agwandàii t’òonch’yaa gaa it’ee tr’iheedàa nigwiindhàt.

I told him if you really want it we would go door to door and to tell everyone ‘We will make a school.’ I told him I couldn’t see a reason to bother the government when they could make a school themselves. I also told him they themselves, the Gwich’in, were the government and could do something to build up this village... I also reminded him that we were Indians, and the only

way we can make a living is by trapping in order to put food in our house.

‘We’ve been around since the early days but we will be gone soon,’ I said.”

~Johnny Frank, *Neerhiinjik* pp. 518-525

Johnny Frank sought out John Fredson to begin a school in Venetie in 1937 (Childs-Mackenzie, 1985). There was worry at first whether there would be enough students to make it worth the effort. But once word began to get around about the school, people began to move their families to Venetie, even giving up good hunting so that their children might gain an education (Mishler, 2001). In 1942 Katherine Peter was asked by people of Arctic Village to begin a school there. She taught her students on the go as people continued their hunting cycles.

Izhik January gwats’an t’ee tr’iinin najj eenjit school altsii. Khaii datthak tr’iinin gwâaltan sharagookwât kwaa gâa dinjii datthak traâ sheenjit nôondak shih chan hàà shik’èggahtii. Aii jyaa dagwàhtl’oo dinjii vigii gâaheendaii eenjit dinjiighit gwik’it googwitr’it gwinli’.

From that January on I held school for the children. All winter I taught the children; no one paid me, but all the men got firewood for me and they also provided food for me. That’s how much the people wanted their children to acquire knowledge and that’s how much they worked for it.

~Katherine Peter, *Neets’atî Gwiindaii* pp. 82-83

As people search for allies in the fight to reverse the shift of endangered minority languages to national and world languages, many look to schools to provide a place where these languages can begin to stage a comeback (McCarty 2008). This is a natural connection to make, since schools have the most educationally focused contact with children. Upon closer

examination, the connection begins to seem more than a little problematic and there are obstacles to overcome before schools can become effective for this purpose.

One of the first things that schools must reconcile is a certain amount of distrust from American Indian and Alaska Native communities who have had a long and difficult relationship with Western educational institutions. The aim of the earliest federal policies sought to convert Indians to Western ways, and eliminate their traditional ways of life “...ignorance of our language is the greatest obstacle to the assimilation of the Indians with our population. It will be better for all when tribal names, distinctions, and languages are obliterated.” (Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1882, p. 239). The historical role of schools was to speed assimilation of minority cultures and languages, not to preserve or maintain them. One could argue that President Bush’s 1994 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Executive Order continues this historical trend (Marlow, 2004; McCarty 2003).

Given the historical trend of schools as institutions of assimilation, there are those who do not think they can be repurposed for language revitalization. Paulston (1994) argues that “schools and schooling can facilitate existing social trends, but they cannot be successful counter to social and economic forces” (p. 7). Paulston sees language shift as the result of larger social, political and economic forces, rather than the language shift causing or affecting social change, and so schools are ineffective solutions to the problem of language shift. For Paulston the relationship of language to society is never causal, but rather more like a mirror, and that minority languages will shift more because of opportunity of interaction with the dominant language, and economic incentives that avail themselves from shifting.

It is true, as Paulston points out, that schools themselves cannot counter existing social trends. But if language revitalization is part of a broader social trend within the community, then schools can and must have a role. McCarty (2008, p.161) argues that schools can become

“strategic platforms for more broad-based language planning, from orthographic standardization, to preparing Indigenous teachers, to elevating the status of oppressed and marginalized languages.” McCarty notes that there is hardly a language revitalization effort anywhere in the world that does not include schools and education as an integral part of its overall plan. For McCarty, the role of schools should not be understated and should be seen as a place of possibilities rather than looked at for its limitations.

This long history of destructive policies has caused many tribes to reject the very idea of teaching traditional activities, as well as language, in a Western style classroom. Spolsky (2002) observes that traditional Navajo are resistant to teaching certain songs within a classroom setting because this would remove the songs from their original context of ceremony and intended purpose of prayerfulness, and so “efforts to maintain traditional Navajo religious practices do not lead automatically to Navajo language preservation” (p. 147). Gwich’in elder Clarence Alexander, at a Gwich’in language-planning meeting in Beaver, AK, shared similar reservations about educating children in the schools, “Drin gwiteegwaach’yaa, niidai’ gwanaa ch’anjaa naii tr’iinini goovahtan, chiiitai tr’eelk’ii, kwanh ts’a’ daroodii ts’a’ ‘gwiinzii ch’adoolk’ii’ diinagahnyaa. –In the old times the elders educated us outdoors, sitting toward the fire they would tell us ‘you all listen good’” (public address, May 2011). Many feel that Gwich’in language, or any other Indigenous language and culture, should not be put into a box for study, but we are approaching a time now where we need to teach our language in the classroom because it is not being learned as a first language any longer.

For those who learned Gwich’in as their first language, the way that Gwich’in is taught in the classroom as a second language, i.e. by breaking down parts of the language, conjugating verbs, and focusing on grammatical elements, can seem very foreign and, frankly, wrong. At the same time though there is not the same opposition to English being taught this way in

schools. Spolsky (2002) points out that the ideology “school is for English” is pretty well entrenched at the state and school district levels, but we also have to look within ourselves and ask if we also believe that ideology. The State and tribes have to work together to foster “strong consensual support for language maintenance” (Spolsky, 2002, pp. 155-156). If we truly feel language revitalization is important, we can influence the political process to bolster the support, as Johnny Frank pointed out earlier, “we are the government.”

Still, despite the troubled history of Western education and Indigenous peoples, the classroom continues to be sought out as a tool for reversing language shift, (Hinton & Hale 2001; Spolsky, 2002; McCarty 2008). The beginnings of this effort among tribes in the United States, probably dates back to the *Bilingual Education Act* (Title VII), of 1968. This act was originally intended as a vehicle for delivering transitional bilingual education and/or English as a Second Language (ESL) programs to minorities in the United States. While many schools used the legislation as intended, tribal schools around the country began to use this as an opportunity for maintenance for tribal languages rather than as a transition to English, (Marlow, 2004).

Like McCarty, Spolsky sees schools as a necessary element in language revitalization efforts. Spolsky (2008) points to how schools might be repurposed, “with sufficient commitment, and when majority governments or international bodies can be persuaded to help, Indigenous minorities can ride the tiger by harnessing the proven language shifting function of school systems in the direction of language maintenance” (p. 158). For Spolsky, the very schools that were used as tools of oppression can be reimagined as places where Indigenous languages, cultures, and understanding can come home to the descendants several generations removed. We are beginning to see this in Alaska as well. One of the missions of Effie Kokrine Charter School, the setting for this research, is to support Alaska Native language revitalization.

The mission of the charter school is to provide educational opportunities for students to succeed in the world by developing a strong academic empowerment. The philosophy of the charter school is that, for the students to achieve their educational goals, learning must connect, or resonate, with them. The school will make extraordinary efforts to relate curriculum, teaching methods and every aspect of the school experience to the homes and social communities from which the students come. Retrieved March 6, 2013 from <http://ekc.k12northstar.org/about/background>

Besides Gwich'in language, Effie Kokrine Charter School (EKCS) has offered other Alaskan Indigenous languages such as Iñupiaq, an Eskimo language, and Koyukon, another Athabascan language. Principal Linda Evans is dedicated to revitalizing Alaska Native languages and goes out of her way to make class offerings available to her students. EKCS is the only school in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District that offers any Alaska Native language classes, and is doing its part to help these languages survive. Principal Evans has spoken about expanding the offerings available and is looking for ways to grow the program. The efforts of EKCS are tied to the early Gwich'in efforts by Johnny Frank, John Fredson, and Katherine Peter, in that we see examples of Native people working to create schooling for themselves. These accomplishments are part of our self-determination as tribal entities in control of our own destinies (Childs-Mackenzie, 1985; Mishler, 2001; Peter, 1992).

Schools by themselves can only do so much; they can function as a support but not as a source of reversing language shift (RLS). Ultimately it will have to be up to individuals, families, communities and planners to be shrewd and broad thinkers when developing RLS strategies. Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1998) point out that RLS requires more than a “bureaucratic fix”, i.e. creating some central bureaucratic entity that will presumably handle

problems as they arise and set a course for others to follow, or a “technological fix”, i.e. “more tools!, fancier copy machines, recording devices, computers,” etc., but the solution boils down to one person speaking to another person. If Gwich’in people want language revitalization we can still follow Johnny Frank’s advice--“Jaghaii *government* vaa deegwadqoh’ài gwaql’in kwaa ~I see no reason to bother the government”--and we can begin a school, we can create spaces where only Gwich’in is spoken, and restore our language to a place of prominence. All it takes is initiative, and a personal commitment to language revitalization for things to start happening. My own personal commitment is to teach.

Role of Teacher

Considering the complex and troublesome history American Indians and Alaska Natives have had with education, it is no surprise that Native American teachers inherit many challenges before they even enter the classroom. Today we have more and more Native American teachers in the profession, but historically that was not the case. Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) observe that “Indian Education” with its long, colonial history has not meant Indian people educating their own, it has always meant others educating Indians. Ruggles Gere (2005) points to a need for Native American teachers to bridge the gap between culture and education. We have to begin training the next generation of Gwich’in language teachers who will continue the work and make sure there are enough to meet the future need.

As a teacher of Gwich’in language (in training) I think it is crucial that the material I share with my students is relevant and reflects the Gwich’in culture and way of life. Brayboy and Castagno (2008, p. 981) point out that students are more engaged if educators look for ways of “contextualizing or localizing curriculum and pedagogy so that it bears some connection and resemblance to the knowledge and learning of the local community.” Klump and McNeir (2005)

show that culturally responsive education increases enrollment rates, and builds stronger connections between students, teachers, and elders. It does not have to be a choice between Indigenous language and success in school, but NCLB often enforces the ideology of English first. Students are able to access their cultural and linguistic heritage, while meeting state educational standards.

As a novice Indigenous language teacher I have to develop my own identity in the classroom. Teacher education is a complex puzzle, and many have written about teachers learning how to be teachers (Bailey & Nunan 1996; Bartels 2005; Burns & Richards 2009; Freeman & Richards 1996; Hawkins 2004; Johnson 2006, 2009; Tedick 2005). One of the important steps for the teacher is to decide what role they will play in the classroom. Kumaravadivelu (2003, p. 7) speaks about “conceptualizing the teaching act” as a necessary step for teachers, and lists possible teacher roles as “an artist and an architect; a scientist and psychologist; a manager and a mentor; a controller and a counselor; a sage on the stage; a guide on the side.” Each of these possible teacher roles entails a different approach, but it is up to the teacher to choose which role they will play. I strive to be a “guide on the side” rather than a “sage on the stage.” A “guide” is a partner in the learning process, encouraging students on their level, as opposed to a “sage” lecturing from high on a mountaintop.

I wanted the student’s learning process to be the focus in my classroom. It is important for students to understand their learning process, how they learn best, and what works for them. My intention in creating a learner-centered classroom was to activate students’ internal heuristics. If students are active in the learning process, and making discoveries through their own investigation of the language, then the learning will have more meaning for them because that knowledge is something they created. I had hoped to structure the classroom along these

lines, but it can be a challenge for even the most experienced teacher, much less the novice teacher.

Novice teachers face particular challenges, and need a great deal of support and mentoring, (Clandinin 1989; Kumazawa, 2012; Scherff, 2008). Novice teachers also go through a process of negotiating and reshaping their self-concepts (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Lortie (1975) described the formation of opinions on teaching as an “apprenticeship of observation”--that is to say, our ideas of what it means to be a teacher have been formed by all our own experiences as students in observation of our teachers. Our apprenticeships as observers of the teaching act can be a double-edged sword; it can spur us to be great teachers or it can inform negatively as well. Tensions can arise from the realities of classroom versus beliefs, uncertainties, extensive range of duties, and reflection on the self (Flores, 2006). Some of these studies show that resilience can come from connection with students, colleagues, and/or original motivations for getting into teaching.

Teacher burnout is a reality, and novice teachers are sometimes so overwhelmed in their new profession that they do not make it past the first few years (Scherff, 2008; Huberman & Vandenberghe, 1999). Novice teachers can have trouble adapting to challenges and pressures that they experience from almost every direction, including from administration, colleagues, students, community, and their own personal goals and expectations of themselves. Depending on school environment, access to mentoring from more experienced teachers, as well as their own adaptability, creativity, and resourcefulness, novice teachers can find ways to thrive despite the challenges posed to them.

Alexander (1986) describes the balance many teachers must achieve in their teaching endeavor: “a teacher’s theory of practice should be based on different types of knowledge: a) speculative theory (by thinkers in the field; b) the findings of empirical research; and c) the

experiential knowledge of practicing teachers.” Kumaravadivelu (2003) describes the varied disciplines from which the language teacher must build their own theory of practice, a personal theory that is “derived from academic disciplines such as general education, linguistic sciences, second language acquisition, cognitive psychology, and information sciences. These and other allied disciplines provide the theoretical bases necessary for the study of language, language learning, language teaching, and language teacher education” (p.18).

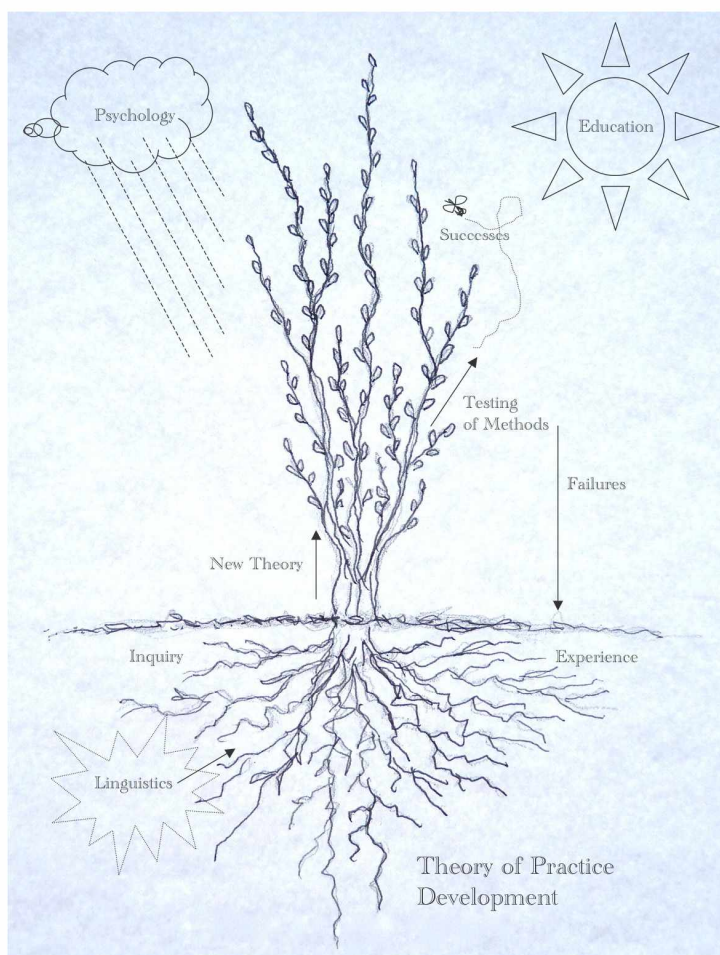


Figure 1: Theory of Practice

As an Indigenous person, I find it useful to think of my development as a teacher as a living and dynamic process that is ever changing. I see myself among language researchers,

practitioners, and learners, as well as counterparts in associated fields of psychology and education. We are all part of a dynamic system, and we have an effect on that system by simply being a participant. Figure 1 above shows a dynamic system in which I as a teacher develop my own theory of practice. My budding theory of practice emerges from the ground and is fed by research in linguistics, psychology, and education. My theory of practice continues to grow with each experience as a teacher, and I could not thrive as a teacher without a balance of all of these necessary elements. The ultimate goal is really a continuous process of putting ideas into practice, reflection, and growth.

The research I conducted will hopefully add to the body of knowledge within this living system. I conducted this research in order to better understand myself as a novice teacher, and as an Indigenous teacher. I used narrative studies methods for my data collection. Narrative studies are a valid research tool for teachers to look into various aspects of their teaching (Casanave, 2005; Chase, 2005; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Fendler (2003) points out that this approach does have its risks, i.e. “getting lost in a house of mirrors,” but Bruner (1996) and Thomas (1993) have shown that autoethnography and narrative studies have a place in teacher education research.

I believe teaching is a sacred profession, a calling if you will. Those who heed the call are deeply motivated toward greater good because teaching itself is a hopeful act. I have had many great teachers in life, but I am not ashamed to say one of the greatest teachers in my life is my own mother. The things she taught me are from centuries of knowledge passed on from our ancestors. It is not hard for me to imagine my mother as a young girl, struggling through the forest, my grandfather following silently behind as she led the way home. We all have a great teacher somewhere in our path in life, one that inspired us to try and teach others.

As teachers, our objective is to give students opportunities to discover within themselves abilities they may not yet know they possess. This is achieved through creating a safe learning environment, but also one that has real stakes involved. Imagine a teacher who only asks questions to which he or she already knows the answers. The students are then mere containers waiting to be filled with the teacher's knowledge. The stakes for the students are greatly diminished, and learning becomes about matching their answers to the teacher's. Students sense intuitively that their own thought process is less valued, and not as important as the teacher's. My own teaching philosophy regarding this point is to value each learner as a whole person. Each learner comes to class with their own sets of challenges, and strengths, and my role is to help them develop their abilities in order to become better language learners.

At the beginning of this thesis I related a story of being lost in the willows as a child, a story of a learner and a teacher. The stories of teachers and students are intertwined, and so it is with this research. My students' stories and experiences are an important part of this research, and together with my story, create a whole picture of the classroom. The role of learners in the classroom is the other side of the same story.

Role of Learner

As language teachers, how we see the role of the learner will determine how we interact with our students. According to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), if we see our students as passive imitators, we will deliver our instruction accordingly, perhaps limiting ourselves to delivering drills that students must repeat back to us. If we see learners as active collaborators, we will have a very different approach, and we may instead seek to create opportunities for students to shape their own learning experiences and move beyond mere imitation. Table 1 shows possible roles for learners (as described by Larsen-Freeman

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Na5lzXZKEV0>), and something of the learning process in those particular roles.

Table 1: Larsen-Freeman (2011): Roles of Learner

Learner as...	Action
Imitator	Learner passively imitates utterances
Cognitive Being	Learner hypothesizes about language, processes input which results in output
Affective Being	Emotional response to learning
Social Being	Learner interacts and communicates in social setting, learns to communicate by communicating
Political Being	Learner is empowered by learning language
Creator	Learner is active creative collaborator in language act

The way in which we perceive our learners will have an effect on how we choose to deliver our instruction, and the way we perceive our learners is shaped again by our own “apprenticeship of observation.” I can find myself struggling against the way I say I want to teach, and the fall back position from my own experience of learning. If we see our students as mere imitators, then a lecture from the chalkboard is probably sufficient. But if we believe our students are more than that, then it will require a step away from the chalkboard and a move from a “teacher fronted” to a “learner centered” classroom.

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills is an organization that draws attention to the readiness of students for the challenges of today’s world. The organization compares classes of old, and how they have changed to meet the needs of students today: “Unlike the classroom of yesteryear that required students to know a great deal of information about the language but did not have an expectation of language use, today’s classroom is about teaching languages so that

students use them to communicate with native speakers of the language” (*retrieved February 17, 2013 from*

http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/Skills%20Map/p21_worldlanguagesmap.pdf). Below is an excerpt from a table showing how classrooms and the roles of learners have changed.

Table 2: 21st Century Skills

IN THE PAST	TODAY
Students learned about the language (grammar)	Students learn to use the language
Teacher-centered class	Learner-centered with teacher as facilitator/collaborator
Focused on isolated skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)	Focus on the three modes: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational
Emphasis on teacher as presenter/lecturer	Emphasis on learner as “doer” and “creator”
Use of technology as a “cool tool”	Integrating technology into instruction to enhance learning
Same instruction for all students	Differentiating instruction to meet individual needs
Confining language learning to the classroom	Seeking opportunities for learners to use language beyond the classroom
Testing to find out what students do not know	Assessing to find out what students can do
Only the teacher knows criteria for grading	Students know and understand criteria on how they will be assessed by reviewing the task rubric
Students “turn in” work only for the teacher	Learners create to “share and publish” to audiences more than just the teacher.
Synthetic situations from textbook	Personalized real world tasks

I strive to be more in the right column than the left. I would rather see the learner as a whole person, as collaborators, and for them to recognize and activate their own learning process. I want my students to be able to use the language more than explain grammatical points. They should be able to communicate with their peers about everyday subjects first of all, and then I give grammar that applies only to that language they are using. The creation of

podcasts entails the interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational, while also reaching outside the classroom. I involved my students in the creation of an assessment rubric (Appendix H) to evaluate their projects.

I decided to use a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. CLT places emphasis on interaction, conversation, and language use rather than on learning *about* the language (Lightbown & Spada 2006). The focus of CLT is “getting things done” in the language rather than on focusing on grammatical forms. Content in a communicative classroom is focused on process more than product, and because the focus is on developing communicative competence over linguistic competence, the content can be unpredictable, or only predictable in the short-term (Richard-Amato, 1998). Breen and Candlin (1979) suggest that a communicative approach requires greater flexibility between learners and teachers, between learners themselves, and between learners and the target language. In CLT a language lesson develops according to what will make acquisition of the target language most likely. For example, in Appendices C & D you can see the language lessons are not focused on grammatical rules, but on the practical task of introducing oneself and possessives in the Gwich’in language.

Students are much more than containers, they are whole human beings that have lives outside the classroom, and are individually motivated in their own pursuit of learning. If allowed, in a student-centered classroom, students can tap into their own internal resources and eventually overcome great obstacles to advance their learning. Their learning needs to be about more than reproducing answers, but about asking questions and creating solutions. To accomplish a student-centered classroom, a teacher has to be willing to relinquish a degree of control, even if this means students might get a little lost once in a while. The long-term reward is students will have developed abilities and skills, which they will be able to rely on again and

again in other situations of learning. I hoped to accomplish this goal by way of the student projects. I thought that having students working on and creating podcasts would require them to be creative and come up with solutions to problems that arose in the process.

Students are important collaborators in their own learning. If I am just teaching students to see how they will perform on a test, they will most likely only learn what they need to pass the test. If learning is about gathering facts, then they will focus on facts. If learning is instead about problem solving, then that is what they will learn. I would rather teach students to be problem solvers, because they will then be able to carry that skill forward in their language learning. If students are expected to memorize instead of imagine, reproduce instead of produce, and are not allowed to negotiate meaning, then their learning will be limited. There are many ways to collaborate with students, including adopting peer assessments, dialogue journals, self-assessment, and portfolios, to name but a few. These types of formative learning strategies are more focused on process rather than product, and I believe foster greater ingenuity and self-reliance among students. Teaching must therefore be conceived with collaboration in mind because ultimately students will learn as much from how we teach them as what we teach them. I hoped to accomplish this through the aforementioned student projects, dialogue journals, and involving students in the creation of assessment measures.

As a language teacher, I feel especially strongly about its importance to education. Language is a part of everything we do, it is as natural to human beings as the air we breathe. And, like the air we breathe, we often do not even notice the language we use on a daily basis in every interaction. Language is central to human understanding, and whether language is taught successfully is of crucial importance to our collective future. As a teacher of an endangered language, I feel that pressure tenfold. I take the responsibility seriously, and I strive to learn as much as my students when I teach. I believe that learning is a lifelong process, and there is

always opportunity to improve my own abilities. The process of writing this thesis is one way for me to achieve that goal of becoming a better teacher.

Role of Story

Googwaraa'ee, ज्याह्स'अ' त्र'िग्विहेन्दैी ऐनजित् दिदिवे गो'अ्ज्. नाराअह्रिी, क्यह त्र'अह्लिी, त्र'िह ह्या नेरिहिीक, अन्स'अ' ज्दिी क'ेिीह'ि' ह्या रेह व्या नाराहअह्रिी त्थक दिीकहवहकहा' त्र'अह्सिी. ज्याह्स'अ' दिीनेनजित् गो'अ्ज्. अन्स'अ' दिीति', अन्स'अ' दिीत्सिी, दिीत्सुु, अन्स'अ' दिीहान नाि त्थक त्स'अन गोग्विग्विरा'ए, एल्डर्स नाि.

That's how we learned to live our lives. We hunt, we set traps, paddle canoes, and those things we need to hunt we would make those things ourselves. That's how it was with us. And our father, and our grandfather, our grandmother, and our mother, all of them we learned from them, the elders. ~Bill Stevens, recording May 2011

Gwich'in education of children traditionally took place on the land in the course of hunting and other subsistence activities. The transmission of the Gwich'in language happened naturally as children interacted with adults. One of the important elements of traditional Gwich'in educational practice is storytelling. Elder Clarence Alexander speaking about his experience as a child in Fort Yukon expressed the importance of storytelling in traditional education, “Drin gwiteegwaach'yaa, niidai' gwanaa, ch'anjaa naai gwandak gwit'eegaahch'yaa, aii haa diinagahtan. –Every day, a long time ago, the elders used story as a way to teach us children” (*public speech to Diiginjik K'yaa Eegaraa'ee gathering in Beaver, Alaska, May 2011*). Stories are what give a culture its identity, but it is also how individuals shape their identity. Stories would be important in my classroom, the students' own stories they would tell in their podcasts, and the focus on the traditional story of Tl'oo Thal. I have sought to incorporate stories not only in the way I taught my class, but also how I conducted and then wrote up my research. Story is an organizing principle of this research in that a “central tenet of

the narrative turn is that speakers construct events through narrative rather than simply refer to events” (Chase 2005, p. 656.)

It is through story that human beings organize and make meaning out of chaos. Bakhtin (1990, p. 37) sees our very lives as a story, through which events at specific times and places are made into a coherent narrative. Our stories represent a deep part of ourselves as human beings (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000), and those stories become crucial as we “reconstruct ourselves” in a new language. Haught and McCafferty (2008) also argue that using story as a way to teach language has advantages: “It provides the opportunity for second language learners to embody language and culture. Furthermore such contexts afford recursive practice with students coming to understand the form and meaning of language and non-verbal communication over time” (p.139). Story can be a way to contextualize language for students, and students who make learning a second language an essential part of their “story” might just be more successful. I wanted to see if I could use story in teaching the Gwich’in language.

Using story as a way to teach language has its advantages. That is, if students are actually doing something with language the learning will become more meaningful, and students “seem to remember things better if [they] have something to do with the words [they] are learning” (Adair-Hauck, 1993). When telling a story there is always a teller and a listener, it is a kind of conversation. Wertsch and Smolka (1993) identify this as “dialogicality... the various ways in which two or more voices come into contact.” Students creating digital storytelling projects are entering into a “dialogue” with students in other classrooms. As I designed my class, I envisioned my students connecting with the language through storytelling, and the language unlocking on a subconscious level as they worked. I also want to organize my analysis around the interwoven stories... my story as the teacher and the stories of the students.

The Role of Technology

My intention in using technology in the classroom was to focus on oral proficiency through the use of podcasting. According to Rosell-Aguilar (2007) the term podcast is a “combination of words... [Apple’s] iPod and broadcast” (p. 472). Podcasts are not an exclusively Apple product, however, and can be downloaded and listened to on any computer and/or personal media player. I wanted my students to move towards speaking the Gwich’in language and I hoped that technology would help keep students engaged in the process. I will now discuss how technology can lend support to the CLT classroom.

I hoped to use podcasting as a task-based learning strategy. Students would create podcasts in which they would introduce themselves, and share these podcasts with other classrooms and the Gwich’in community. Task-based language learning (Ellis, 2003; Pica, Kang, & Sauro, 2006) focuses on the use of authentic language and on asking students to do meaningful tasks in the target language. Assessment is based on successfully completing real world tasks rather than only accuracy of linguistic forms. Siekmann (2008) found that task-based learning projects can be useful for collective scaffolding in which peers “collaboratively build on each other’s imperfect knowledge to construct meaning” (p. 146). Students working on a task such as creating podcasts can “support each other’s development through co-construction of meaning” (Swain, 2000, p. 110). I hoped that students working towards a goal would help each other to learn and motivate one another in the accomplishment of the task. One other goal I hoped to achieve through creating podcasts, is for students to produce authentic Gwich’in language materials for other learners. I was excited at the possibility for my students to be among the first to create authentic Gwich’in materials through podcasting.

The advent of Web 2.0 technologies has changed the Internet from a place of static web pages with no interactive capabilities, to a lively community of collaborators, and users of the

Internet from passive receptors of professionally produced material to having the ability to shape and create their own works (Warschauer, 2002). Examples of Web 2.0 platforms focused on user created content include YouTube, social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. One of the ways in which users have been creating content is through podcasts. The popularity of podcasts (Ducate & Lomicka, 2009) has increased over the years because of “...their simplicity in creating, editing, publishing, and listening to them” (p. 68).

Podcasts have also caught the attention of language teachers because of their potential for pedagogical purposes. Rosell-Aguilar (2007) listed five (among several other reasons) why podcasting is a great language learning tool:

1. Portable: convenience, can be carried with and listened to as many times as necessary... functionalities like pause, forward, skip, allow the learner to be in control of the pace.
2. Attractive: players are widely owned... [educational materials] obtained from music stores [such as iTunes]... feel less like learning.
3. Motivating: students ... attracted to format... help[s] them engage with materials they might otherwise not use.
4. Easy access: content management software such as iTunes or Juice are free and easy to navigate.
5. Value: cost of producing traditional materials [are low] and can be done in hours rather than years.

Another positive aspect is that language instruction delivered via technology like podcasts and other media is likely to be more relevant to younger learners. I wanted to see if my students would more easily take to learning Gwich'in for the above reasons, and so I

planned my semester to include technology from the outset. I will discuss CLT in relation to podcasting and technology.

Young people who have grown up with technology are literate in different ways than their parents and grandparents, and are much more accustomed to multimodal learning. Research in digital literacies (Hobbs, 2004; Livingstone, 2004), shows that there is “a range of perspectives on which aspects of the use of media are essential to notions of literacy, ranging from a critical consumption to being able to use the tools for production” (Ducate & Lomicka, 2009, p. 68). Whereas a traditional notion of literacy might have to do with written and spoken word, new digital literacies involve those skills as well as “a range of modal representations in a multiplicity of hybrid forms drawing on semiotic resources such as words, shapes, colors, lines, space, textures, sounds, light, movement, and rhythm” (p. 80). I hoped the creation of podcasts would involve multi-modal learning through the manipulation of images, text, spoken language, and sound elements.

If language learners are to complete their learning in a second language, then output is an important requirement. Some might argue that the only requirement to learn a language is “comprehensible input” (Krashen, 1985). But others (Swain, 1985; Swain & Lapkin, 1995; Swain, 2000) recognize output as essential for second language learning. Output is a way for students to “notice the gap” between their own speech production and that of native speakers, allowing them to make improvements. Output is an area to which technology is particularly well suited. podcasts allow students to listen to themselves as they edit their output, and then go back, listen again, and revise as necessary. They can also receive feedback from other students and from their instructor.

According to Ducate and Lomicka (2009) phonology (pronunciation) is often overlooked in second language classrooms, although it is one of the things that clearly mark a

non-native beginning speaker. Podcasting can be used as a tool for improvement of students' pronunciation (Lord, 2008, p. 369) by focusing in on sounds unique to the target language. Erben et al. (2008) also highlight technology's ability to provide opportunities for comprehensible linguistic output. Student output in the language is built in to the production of their podcasts, and they can learn from their own as well as other students' recordings.

There are special ramifications for using technology in an endangered language classroom. The first is that while technology is a great tool and can do many things, it is not going to be the savior of any dying language. Saving any dying language has to come from people and not machines. Warschauer (2002) shares his belief in the crucial role human capacity plays in relation to technology, "we have the hardware, we have the software, but we lack the humanware" (p. 472). Technology can be an agent of language shift (Siekman & Sikorski, 2013; Moses, 2010). Endangered language groups can benefit greatly from technology, but should proceed with caution.

With that caution, technology can also be a very useful tool for endangered languages. McHenry (2002) sees technology as important in helping tribal groups to create spaces online for their endangered languages. He also stresses that technology can provide opportunities for members of endangered language groups to represent themselves rather than outsiders. Tribal groups can benefit from technology in language preservation, literacy, pedagogy, and prestige (Hermes & King, 2013; Haag & Coston, 2002; Buszard-Welcher, 2001; Kroskrity & Reynolds, 2001). In my ideal situation we could share our podcasts with other Gwich'in language classrooms to hopefully inspire them in their own language learning by seeing what is possible through technology. I see this as crucial to inviting more Gwich'in people (and other language groups) to begin using technology as a tool for language revitalization.

I have included literature relevant to my particular research, including research on novice teachers, communicative language teaching, role of teachers, role of students, and role of technology and story. In the next chapter I describe my research and teaching methodology.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

With this research I sought to create close connections between my central research questions, the research design, data collection, and analysis. The questions I developed for this research boiled down to

1. How does a novice teacher experience teaching Gwich'in as an additional language in a High School class?
2. How do students experience learning Gwich'in as an additional language?

In this chapter I will outline my research design, setting, participants, data collection and analysis.

Research Design

The research design for this study is a qualitative model. Mackey and Gass (2005) state that qualitative research “can be taken to refer to research that is based on descriptive data that does not make (regular) use of statistical procedures” (p. 162). Another characteristic of qualitative data is the relationship between the researcher, the research process and setting. The qualitative researcher implicates themselves in their research rather than seeking to be an “objective observer.” Miles and Huberman (1994) described some of the characteristics of qualitative research characteristics as seen in Table 3 below. While this is not an exhaustive description of qualitative research, it gives a good overview of the qualities, goals and objectives of such research. I would have prolonged contact with the research setting and participants, collect data through journals and exit interviews, and have an emic perspective by conducting action research on my own teaching. In the planning stages of this study, I decided that a qualitative design would make the most sense based on my research questions and the type of classroom I sought to create.

Table 3: Qualitative Research

Miles and Huberman	My Study
Entails prolonged contact with research environment, reflective of everyday life	Conducted research during the course of a 20 week semester
About gaining a holistic overview of the context	Able to see whole picture as teacher
Seeks emic perspectives from within research context	Part of the research environment as teacher
Data organized into themes, but maintained in original forms	Teacher and student journals and exit interviews as source of data
Explores the ways people understand, take action, and manage everyday situations	Reflection important part of study, enabled me to change directions as necessary
Many interpretations possible, but some are more compelling	Frequency of appearance of themes organizing principle in data analysis
Little standardized instrumentation, researcher is main “measurement device”	Teacher action research with journals as source of data
Analysis of words organized to contrast, compare, analyze and discover patterns	Analysis of teacher and student journals organized into themes

I used narrative inquiry methods, i.e. writing a daily teacher journal, and students writing in their journals, as my data collection. Narrative inquiry is a particular subtype, a “field in the making” and is a mix of interdisciplinary analysis, approaches, and combinations of innovative and traditional methods with an interest in particulars of a life as narrated by the person (Chase, 2005). Personal narrative is recognized as a legitimate form of inquiry and can describe either a compelling topical narration or refer to diaries, journals, and letters (Casanave, 2005; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Fendler (2003) describes teacher reflection as a possible avenue of development for the novice teacher. Bruner (1996) and Thomas (1993) have examined narratives for trustworthiness in establishing data sets.

Lantolf and Pavlenko (2000) assert that narrative inquiry can “bring to the surface aspects of human activity... that cannot be captured in the more traditional approach to research.”

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is strengthened by prolonged contact with the research participants and environment, and by collecting data in as many contexts and situations as possible, (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). In my case I was in the classroom for 20 weeks, and this gives my research stronger credibility than if I had only visited the class once or twice during that same time period. Another way credibility is established is by triangulating data sources, and using interrater reliability measures. By comparing teacher journal entries, and journal entries from students, lesson plans, classroom observations, etc., a more dimensional picture is created than through any one of these data sources alone.

Transferability

Findings from qualitative research are rarely directly transferable to another context, but transferability can be enhanced by what is known as “thick description.” With thick description “researchers report their findings with sufficient detail for readers to understand the characteristics of the research context and participants, the audience will be able to compare the research situation with their own” (Mackey & Gass, 2005). The idea behind multiple perspectives forming the research data is to give a more fully dimensional picture for other research contexts. Hopefully other teachers considering similar research will discover useful ideas in my research.

Gwich'in Language

The Gwich'in language is one in the family of 47 Athabascan languages spoken in Alaska, Canada, western and southwestern United States. Athabascan languages are also part of a larger language family called Na Dene that includes Tlingit and Eyak. All of the Na Dene languages are considered endangered (Krauss, 1998), with some, like Eyak and Tagish, having gone extinct.

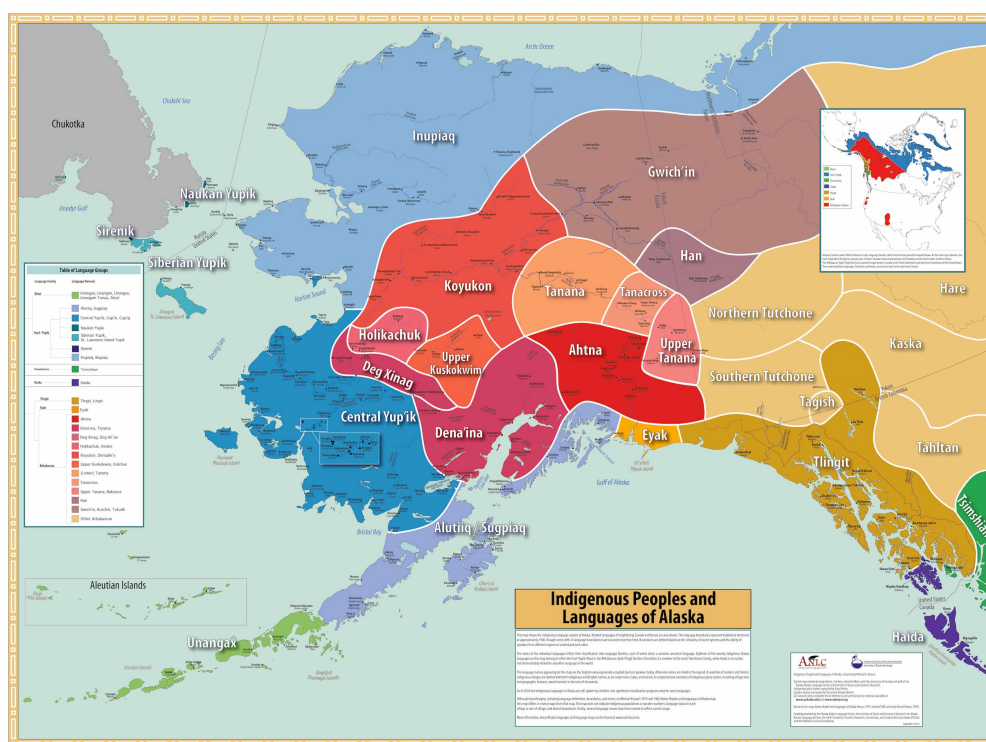


Figure 2: Alaska Native Languages Map courtesy of Alaska Native Language Center

Krauss and Golla (1981) reported the number of Gwich'in speakers to be 1,200 total between Alaska and Canada. Sikorski (2008) conducted a survey of Alaska Gwich'in, asking communities to self-report the number of fluent Gwich'in speakers. According to that survey the number of speakers in Alaska was 272. Those numbers have dropped since this survey due to the passing of elders and other speakers. The number today would roughly be closer to 250.

Today younger Gwich'in speakers are in their late 30s and the eldest are in their 90s. Gwich'in is considered an endangered language due to the fact that today no children are learning Gwich'in as their first language.



Figure 3: Gwich'in Communities courtesy of Alaska Native Language Center

The Gwich'in language is traditionally spoken in northeastern Alaska, and in northwest Canada in the Yukon and Northwest Territories. In Alaska, Gwich'in communities (Figure 3 above) include Vashraji K'eq (Arctic Village), Vjhtaji (Venetie), Gwichyaa Zhee (Fort Yukon), Jalgitsik (Chalkyitsik), Tseenduu (Beaver), Danzhit Khaiinlaji (Circle), and Deenduu (Birch Creek). On the Canadian side are the communities of Van Tat (Old Crow), Teet'it Zhee (Fort McPherson), Tsiigehtchik (Arctic Red River), Aklavik and Inuvik. Today many Gwich'in speakers also make their home in the urban centers of Tanan (Fairbanks), Anchorage in Alaska, or Whitehorse in the Yukon Territory, and points further. I may use these Gwich'in community names interchangeably in this thesis.

Syllabus Spring 2011
Effie Kokrine Charter School
January 4 - May 18

Title of Course:	Beginning Gwich'in
Instructors:	Allan Diton Hayton Wayne Horine
Contact:	474-6587 or ahayton@alaska.edu wayne.horine@k12northstar.org
Office Hours:	by appointment
Class Times:	2:49 – 3:38 MTWTh 2:12 – 3:38 Fridays

Course Description: Introduction to Gwich'in, an Athabascan language along the upper Yukon River and in Northwestern Canada. Open to speakers and non-speakers. This course will cover Gwich'in conversations and cultural studies. Gwich'in language immersion will be utilized, following thematic units of Gwich'in language and culture. By the end of the semester, students should have a strong grasp of basic vocabulary and be able to carry on simple conversation. There will be performance and technological components to the class with the use of blogs, podcasts, and the creation of an iMovie based on the traditional Gwich'in story of Tl'oo Thal.

Materials: iPod or mp3 player, computers, camera, Garage Band

Attendance and Class Participation: Attendance and participation are important in any class, but especially in a second language class. We are creating a language community and must rely on each other for practice, learning, and advancement as a group in the language. For this reason, 50% of your grade will be based on attendance and participation. In order to earn the full credit for attendance and participation, you must arrive to class on time and fully prepared. Students are invited to Takudh singing group at St. Matthew's the first and third Thursday of every month from 5:30 to 7pm. The Takudh group will give you more exposure to the language.

Grading:	Participation/Attendance 50%	Podcast 10%
	iMovie 10%	Exams 15%
	Blog 15%	

Thematic Units:

Greetings	Emotions	Hunting	Commands
Weather	Food	Animals	Camping
Family	Stories	Kinship	Body Parts
Family Roles	Postpositions	Fishing	Clothing

Figure 4: EKCS Syllabus

My syllabus (Figure 4 above) begins with students introducing themselves and where they are from. From there we move on to learning kinship terms to introduce family.

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Figure 5: Semester Plan/Disruptions

When beginning a new unit, I try to make sure that material we have already covered is incorporated. I want to grow students' learning in the language, but not leave behind what they have already learned, so the language they have learned is continuously spiraled back into the lessons as their knowledge grows. I sought to introduce my students to the Gwich'in language, and focused on getting them started with basic conversational skills. The way the Gwich'in language works is very different than what the students are accustomed to with English. Gwich'in has a different sound system, and word order than English.

<u>The Gwich'in Alphabet</u>		
<u>Consonants</u>		
<u>Stops and Affricates</u>		
<u>Plain</u>	d	dl ddh dz dr j g '
<u>Aspirated</u>	t	tł tth tz tr ch k
<u>Glottalized</u>	t'	tł' tth' ts' tr' ch' k'
<u>Fricatives</u>		
<u>Voiced</u>	v	l dh z zhr zh gh
<u>Voiceless</u>	f*	ı th s shr sh kh h
<u>Sonorants</u>		
<u>Voiced</u>	m	n r y
<u>Voiceless</u>		nh rh
*used only in loan words		
<u>Vowels**</u>		
	<u>Long</u>	<u>Short</u>
<u>High Front</u>	ii	i
<u>High Back</u>	uu	u
<u>Mid Front</u>	ee	e
<u>Mid Back</u>	oo	o
<u>Low Central</u>	aa	a
** All vowels may also be nasalized, indicated in writing by a nasal hook (,) beneath the vowel letter(s).		

Figure 6: Gwich'in Alphabet, Peter (1979)

Not included in Figure 5 above are diphthongs such as aii, eii, oaa, etc. The way that the Gwich'in language is written can sometimes confuse students that try to apply English rules to

Gwich'in. The vowel [e, ee] for example is pronounced like “been” rather than “fee.” There are a number of consonants that are not as strong in English, such as the barred L, and the glottal stops t', k', tr', tl', ts', tth', ch'. The Gwich'in language also makes use of low, falling-rising and rising-falling tones, as in the words dëindhàn and shrôonch`yaa. In addition there are nasal diacritics which are used, as in the following examples: ąįį, qą, ęįį.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for learners of Gwich'in is the verb system. Gwich'in morphology is considered an agglutinated system, wherein conjugation builds upon verb stems. The stem is typically at the end of the verb and conjugation occurs by adding and modifying prefixes. In Gwich'in, there are at least four main basic patterns of verbs, which are known as classifiers. The chart below shows these four main verb classifiers of Gwich'in, which are in the present “tense.” Past and future tenses add even greater complexity. For example, the verb for “to make” Θ *altsii* (where the Θ represents an object), would be Θ *dhaltsaii* for past tense “made Θ ”, and Θ *haltsyaa* for future “will make Θ .” So a student would have to master the first, second, and third person, singular and plural, past, present, and future, and the four verb classifiers, to be able to become conversant in Gwich'in. There are also dual forms for verbs in the Gwich'in language, a grammatical feature that is nonexistent in everyday English. Duals involve actions with two people, sitting, sleeping, walking, etc. For further readings on Gwich'in language please refer to <http://www.uaf.edu/anlc/languages/ga/>; <http://www.ynlc.ca/languages/gw/gw.html>.

	L Classifier	L Classifier	D Classifier	Zero Classifier (active)
	To make	To run	To be tired	To be cold
1s	Ø altsii	Algal	Cheeshandak	Ihdluu
2s	Ø ahtsii	Angal	Cheenandak	Indluu
3s	Ø ahtsii, Ø yahtsii	Aagal	Cheendak	Idluu
1p	Ø tr'ahtsii	Tr'aagal	Cheereendak	Tr'idluu
2p	Ø ohtsii	Oogal	Cheekhwandak	Ohdluu
3p	Ø gahtsii	Gaagal	Cheegeendak	Gidluu
	To smell Ø	To dance	To drink (something)	To cry
1s	Ø altsan	Ch'aldaa	Ø shinijj	Ihtree
2s	Ø ahtsan	Ch'andaa	Ø ninijj	Intree
3s	Ø ahtsan, Ø yahtsan	Ch'aadaa	Ø dinijj, Ø yinijj	Itree
1p	Ø tr'ahtsan	Ch'araadaa	Ø tr'iinijj	Tr'itree
2p	Ø ohtsan	Ch'oodaa	Ø khwinijj	Ohtree
3p	Ø gahtsan	Ch'agaadaa	Ø giinijj	Gitree

Figure 7: Gwich'in Verb Classifiers (present tense)

Considering the complexity of the language I was expecting the students to learn, I planned to only introduce two to three verbs per week. Those few verbs in addition to any associated vocabulary could really add up to a very large amount of language over the course of a semester. It can be challenging to motivate students in the face of the amount of language we would be covering, so I had to explore different strategies to keep the learning engaging and the class moving forward.

Setting

Fairbanks, Alaska is the second largest city in Alaska with a population of roughly 100,000. The major employers in Fairbanks are the two nearby military installations of Fort Wainwright and Eielson Air Force Base, the University of Alaska Fairbanks, as well as

extraction industries such as oil and mining. Fairbanks is connected to the larger city of Anchorage via the Parks Highway, and the Lower 48 is also accessible by driving the Alaska Canada Highway through Canada. Winters in Fairbanks can be long, cold, and dark; temperatures can drop to -60 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter and climb to 100 degrees above zero in the summer. The darkest part of the year bottoms out on December 21 with 3 hours of daylight, and is balanced by near 24-hour daylight in the splendid summer months.

According to the 2010 census the population of Fairbanks is 97,581. Alaska Natives/American Indians represent about 7.2% of the population in Fairbanks (14.9% statewide), while Whites represent 78.2%, Blacks 5.0%, Hispanics 6.3%, Asians 2.8%, Pacific Islanders .4%, and those who reported more than one background at 6.4% (*retrieved March 20, 2013 from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/02/02090.html>*). Native organizations, such as Fairbanks Native Association, World Eskimo Indian Olympics, Doyon Ltd. (the regional corporation created by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act), and others play a prominent role politically in Fairbanks and Alaska, and are a significant part of the local and state economy.

Effie Kokrine Charter School (EKCS) was established in 2005. The school is a stand-alone charter school within the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (FNSBSD). Prior to attaining its status as a charter school, the EKCS was known as Howard Luke Academy (this name has been retained as Howard Luke Campus). The school's history traces further back to 1982 when it was founded as the "Alternative School." I was among the first class of students to attend the alternative school, which was then located in the basement of a church in the downtown area of Fairbanks.

EKCS is a free school serving students in grades 7-12. The student population ranged from 150-200 depending on enrollment. Students are of Alaska Native and non-Native

backgrounds. Class sizes are 15-20 students per class, compared to 25-30 in the regular school district. This school was the fruition of over three years of planning on the part of many individuals in partnership with organizations such as Tanana Chiefs Conference, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, Doyon Foundation, Fairbanks Native Association, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Interior Native Educators Association, and many parents and community members.

The reason for creating an “alternative” school was that many parents, community members, and educators felt that the larger secondary schools were not meeting the needs of Alaska Native and American Indian (AN/AI) students in the district. According to a report from the First Alaskans Institute (2005), AN/AI students represent 25% of the total statewide population of 7th-12th graders, but represented 37% of the dropouts or those failing academically (*retrieved March 16, 2013 from*

http://www.firstalaskans.org/documents_fai/Brief%20Version_Final%20GBN%2010-07.pdf).

To address this problem the EKCS Advisory Board, which consists of concerned parents and educators, and Principal Linda Evans have greater leeway in the way the school is structured as well as in the creation of the school curriculum.

EKCS’s Spiral Curriculum (see Figure 8 below) seeks to access traditional Alaska Native sources of knowledge for students. These are resources that might be overlooked at other more mainstream schools in the district. The EKCS website describes how the curriculum works, “Classes include both traditional and contemporary knowledge. A science lesson on weather might include how our ancestors were able to forecast weather, as well as how modern technology works.”, *retrieved January 19, 2012 from <http://www.fnsbsd.org/ekcs>*. This innovative curriculum makes EKCS a school that welcomes the teaching of Alaska Native languages. In addition to Gwich’in, the two other Alaskan Indigenous languages that were

being taught in 2011 included Koyukon, another Athabascan language, and Iñupiaq, an Eskimo language.

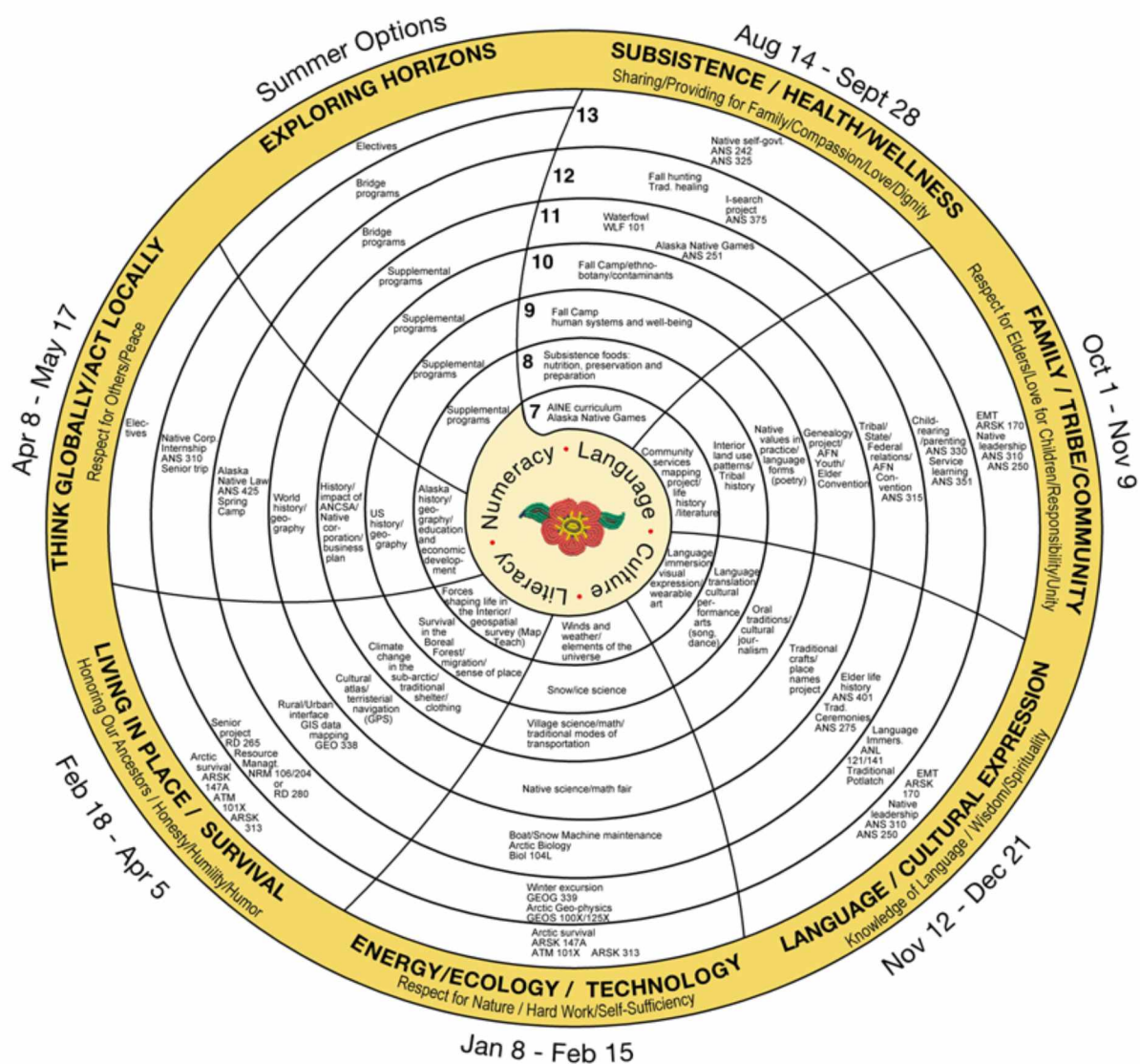


Figure 8: Effie Kokrine Spiral Curriculum

The figure above serves as a visual. Below I have reproduced below the subheadings within the “Language, Cultural Immersion” section of the spiral:

- Knowledge of Language, Wisdom/Spirituality

- Language immersion, visual expression, wearable art
- Language translation, cultural performance, arts (song, dance)
- Oral tradition, cultural journalism
- Traditional crafts, place names projects
- Elder life history, ANS 401 Traditional ceremonies, ANS 275
- Language immersion, ANL 121/141, Traditional Potlatch
- EMT ARSK 170, Native Leadership, ANS 310 & 250

ANS is Alaska Native Studies, and includes courses that are taught at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. From the EKCS Spiral Curriculum, I intended to incorporate language immersion, language translation, cultural performance, and oral tradition in my class. Language immersion, or staying in the target language as long as possible, is my preferred modus operandi in the daily classroom. If students are immersed in the target language, they will be better able to develop their own language learning abilities. There had to be some translation in this class as students adapted their storytelling projects from English to Gwich'in. And cultural performance and oral tradition entered the picture through the telling of the Tl'oo Thal story.

The day at EKCS is shorter than at other schools, with classes beginning at 10 am and finishing at 3:40 pm. Because students come from all over the district to attend EKCS, it is necessary for some students to catch a regular school bus to a mainstream school like Lathrop, and then a second bus to EKCS. Many of the students are what is called “non-traditional,” with some working or starting families, and others are enrolled in the Early College program where they can get university credit while still in high school. The EKCS curriculum is spiraled so that students are cyclically returned to various themes as they move through grade levels.

Participants

Myself. I am a novice Gwich'in language instructor, and have been teaching since the fall semester of 2009. I grew up in the Gwich'in village called Arctic Village, Alaska, which is 300 miles from Fairbanks. I learned the Gwich'in language from the age of four through immersion by hearing it spoken throughout the community. I learned to read and write Gwich'in through the K-12 bilingual program at the Arctic Village School. I also consider myself a continuing learner of Gwich'in language. When I began teaching Gwich'in I realized that some parts of my language ability had fossilized when I left for college at age 17. There were long periods in my adult life where I was not speaking Gwich'in on a regular basis and there were many parts of my language ability that had atrophied from non-use. I also did not learn explicit grammatical rules for Gwich'in language when I was growing up, and so I have had a lot of learning to do in this area.

I attended college in Kansas, first at the Haskell Indian Junior College and then finishing my BA in Theatre & Film at the University of Kansas in 1992. I spent many years as a theatre professional, writing and directing plays, and working as an actor. My work took me many places both geographically and creatively. I have tried where I could to incorporate Gwich'in language into my work, particularly with the southeast Alaska companies Naa Kahidi and Yeil Sé: Raven's Voice, which are both Alaska Native theatre companies with a focus of carrying on oral traditions. I am the teacher of the class where I conducted this research. I moved back to the interior when I was offered a teaching position at UAF in the fall of 2009. That semester was my first time teaching in a formal classroom setting, and I had six students. *Students.* There were eight students that participated in this research, out of a class of fifteen. There were several students who attended early on in the semester, but who later either transferred to other schools in the district or relocated back to their respective villages. The

eight students included in this study were the ones who remained enrolled until the end of the semester. They ranged in ages from 15 to 19, and had varying backgrounds with Gwich'in language from some exposure through family members to no prior experience at all with Gwich'in.

Table 4: Student Participants

Name	Sex	Age	Community	Background
Khehkwaii	Male	15	Gwichyaa Zhee	Gwich'in
Ch'akheetsuu	Female	16	Danzhit Haiinlaili	Gwich'in
Nich'it	Female	16	Viihtaii	Gwich'in
Shoh Ki'	Male	16	Tanan	Koyukon
Lidii T'an	Female	17	Tanan	Hispanic
Daagoo	Female	18	Gwichyaa Zhee	Gwich'in
Ndaalahch'yaa	Female	18	Tanan	Iñupiaq
Yahdii	Male	18	Gwichyaa Zhee	Gwich'in

Khehkwaii, male, 15, Gwich'in heritage student. This student is originally from Fort Yukon. He is the youngest in the class. He has had exposure to Gwich'in language through family members who are Gwich'in speakers. He said his family would often speak to him in Gwich'in, and he knew some of the language.

Ch'akheetsuu, female, 16, Gwich'in heritage student. This student is from Circle, and has had minimal exposure to the Gwich'in language. She is very creative, and prefers to work independently rather than in groups. She is close friends with Shoh Ki'.

Nich'it, female, 16, Gwich'in heritage student. Nich'it is originally from Venetie. Both of her parents are Gwich'in. Her father is a speaker of Gwich'in, and her mother understands Gwich'in but usually responds in English. Nich'it's paternal and maternal grandparents are

fluent Gwich'in language speakers, and the community of Venetie has many speakers, so Nich'it has a good exposure to the language. Nich'it is a member of the EKCS basketball team.

Shoh Ki', male, 16, Native background (Koyukon). Shoh Ki' is of Koyukon heritage, and lives in Fairbanks. He is an excellent language learner, and has prior L2 learning experience having studied Spanish. He had not been exposed to the Gwich'in language prior to this class. My impression of him is that he is a very independent thinker, creative, and enjoys learning languages.

Lidii T'an, female, 17, non-Native background. Lidii T'an is Hispanic from California. She has prior second language experience with Spanish. Her personality is very outgoing and she brings enthusiasm to the classroom. She was also taking classes at UAF and had to leave early twice a week to catch a shuttle to campus.

Daagoo, female, 18, Gwich'in heritage student. Daagoo is from Fort Yukon. She is actively involved in Native dance. Her prior exposure to the Gwich'in language comes mainly from her grandmother, who also taught her how to dance. She has formal instruction in Gwich'in language from the Fort Yukon School. She has also heard the language spoken in Fort Yukon by family and community members. She wants to continue studying Gwich'in at UAF.

Ndaalahch'yaa, female, 18, Native background (Iñupiaq). Ndaalahch'yaa is an inquisitive student, and offered many insights and suggestions through our journal dialogs.

Yahdii, male, 18, Gwich'in heritage student. Yahdii is originally from Fort Yukon. His father is Gwich'in from Fort Yukon and his mother is Koyukon from Nulato. On his father's side he has many aunts and uncles who are fluent Gwich'in speakers, and so he has heard the language being spoken in his home environment. He also had Gwich'in language instruction through the Fort Yukon School. He is a member of the EKCS basketball team.

Procedures

In November 2010, I met with Principal Linda Evans to discuss teaching at her school while doing data collection for this thesis. I wanted to make sure I understood any expectations Principal Evans might have, and what barriers to the research I would need to overcome. Initially she wanted me to teach two classes five days a week, one class each for junior and senior high school students. My advisor did not think this would be manageable along with my being a full-time graduate student, and working part-time as a research assistant. Principal Evans gave her permission to my research proposal, and it was agreed I would teach one class three days a week instead.

There were still several layers of approvals to be negotiated before I would be able to conduct my research. UAF has an Institutional Review Board (IRB) that covers any research conducted under its auspices, and the FNSBSD has its own protocol for research to be conducted in any of its schools. I had to make sure that I carefully followed each of these protocols, especially considering my research would involve Native American students who were also underage. I also presented my research proposal to the Effie Kokrine Advisory Board (Appendix I).

I researched if the FNSBSD had teaching standards for Gwich'in language, and I was surprised to find there were (Appendix H). Having these standards in place helped me as I

began to map out my semester. I began teaching on January 7, 2011. I started out teaching 5 days a week, up until my classes began at UAF when I moved to three days a week. I wanted to establish a connection with the students, and being there more often would help build their trust in me. The approval process for my research proposal to UAF and FNSBSD would take some time, so I held off mentioning any research to my students and just taught as I regularly would.

Approvals were eventually gathered (Appendices A & B), and I introduced the possibility of being a part of this study to my students. I spoke to the class as a whole and explained what the study was, and what I intended to do with any data collected. I explained anything related to them would be kept confidential, that their participation is voluntary, and that they could decide at any time to not participate. I also explained that their grade in the class would not be affected, either positively or negatively, whether or not they agreed to be involved. And lastly, I informed them that this study is meant to benefit Gwich'in language teaching and learning, as well as benefit other Indigenous languages. Eight out of fifteen students agreed to participate, and I gave them assent forms for them to sign, and consent forms for their parents to sign (Appendices B & C).

The data collected for this study are from my daily teacher journal, student journals (transcribed samples of each in Appendices K & L), two video-recorded classroom observations, student digital storytelling projects, my own prepared lesson plans, and exit interviews with the students. I let the students know that they were free to write whatever they felt like in their journals, about what they learned that day, what they would like to learn, questions, concerns, reflections, what was difficult for them, what they enjoyed in class, and anything else they felt like writing. I would take the time each day to write responses in their journals, and I made sure to ask them questions. It was important to me to create a dialog with them about the class.

After I responded to them in their journals, I would spend at least a half hour writing in my own journal. I found that it was better to immediately write after class because the memory would begin to fade otherwise. I discovered it is important to record as much detail as possible, as it represents the data that will be usable at a later date. I tried to cast as wide a net as possible, but even when I had many things on my mind I still found it difficult to put thoughts to paper.

For the recorded classroom observations, I let the students know on what dates I would be recording so they would have advance notice. I placed the camera to the back of the room so it would be as unobtrusive as possible. Thankfully none of the students objected to having the camera in the classroom, and the classes went pretty much normal as any other day. It can be nerve wracking for anybody to have a camera focused on them, and it can make a person overly self-conscious in their behavior.

I thought it might be better if someone other than myself conducted the interviews, since the students might be more open giving answers to someone who was not grading them. I enlisted the assistance of one of my committee members, Kathy Sikorski, who is herself Gwich'in and a language teacher.

Excerpt # 1: Interview

The reason I am interviewing you is to capture any final thoughts you might have about your semester learning Gwich'in. You are free at any time to not answer a question I might ask. What you have to say is very important to me and other language teachers and learners. You can answer any way you like, there are no right or wrong answers. You are not being graded on your answers, and your final grade will not be raised or lowered by your answers here.

What have you enjoyed most about learning Gwich'in?

What has been the most challenging thing about learning this language?

Will you continue to learn the Gwich'in language?

How do you feel the technology (podcasts, iMovie) helped your learning of Gwich'in?

What would you say to other Gwich'in language learners?

Do you have anything you'd like to say to older, maybe more fluent speakers of Gwich'in?

Do you think you might one day teach the Gwich'in language?

Any other thoughts you would like to share?

If not, I want to say Mähsi' Choo for being my student this semester, and I hope we can continue to learn and communicate in Gwich'in. Your participation in this class will be important to future generations. I hope you will learn more and teach what you have learned to others. We all have a story to tell the world, learning Gwich'in is now part of your story. Don't be afraid to share your story with others. ~Exit Interview conducted May 6 & 7, 2011

Analysis

I used grounded theory in the analysis of my data. Grounded theory was first formulated into a methodology of qualitative data analysis by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in their 1967 work *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Originally called constant comparative method, grounded theory is used to develop a hypothesis of a particular phenomenon that is “grounded” in the data collected. Bryant and Charmaz (2007) describe Grounded Theory analysis as an inductive process in which conceptual frameworks or theories are developed from looking at the data, “the method favors analysis over description, fresh categories over preconceived ideas and extant theories, and systematically focused sequential data collection over large initial samples” (p. 608). Researchers using grounded theory seek to avoid having preformed opinions about the data and prefer to let the data inform analysis. Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe how Grounded Theory allows for the data collection and analysis boundaries to be blurred, as data is collected and analyzed it can inform changes in the

direction of the research. Although this approach to data collection and analysis was controversial early on (Hood, 2007), today it is an accepted research tool.

Table 5: Coding Schemes

Journal Entries	Code	Theme	Major Incidents/Reflections
<p>January 7, 2011 Friday</p> <p>Today I had plans to have the class sit in a circle and review each other's Gwich'in names. As soon as I got them in a circle an announcement came over the loud speakers about a pep rally going on in the gym. Attendance of the pep rally was up to the teachers. I tried to keep the students in class, but I could tell that they were really not there. I asked the class who really wanted to go to the pep rally, and a bunch of hands went up. I asked if anyone wanted to stay in class, and one person kind of raised their hand. I let the students go. I turned and was packing my stuff to leave as well, and when I turned around there were still three students sitting there. Another student returned later from the pep rally, so I ended up with the four students that day. I was not sure what to do with them, so I was honest and explained what I had planned, and how it might not work with this small a group, but we would do our best. I was really wishing I had some sort of back up plan.</p>	<p>Blue</p> <p>Purple</p>	<p>Disruptions</p> <p>responsibility</p>	<p>Disruptions come in all forms and are going to happen whether or not I want them to. It is important to have back up plans each time I go to class.</p> <p>Students can surprise you. When you think you know what they will do, they can choose to do the opposite. I guess I would have probably gone to the rally too when I was their age.</p>
<p>Monday January 10, 2011</p> <p>Stood in a circle with students and reviewed their names. They learned their own name and other's. It took the whole 50 minutes, didn't expect it to go that long but it's good they took the time they needed. It gave me an idea of their levels/abilities. I think I need to factor in that it is going to take a lot longer to teach them than I thought. In my mind it all goes like lightning, but in reality it takes a lot longer for them to get it down.</p>	<p>red</p>	<p>Time</p>	<p>Learning language takes more time than I think it will, need to be conscious of pace in my teaching.</p> <p>Something to consider as I am doing lesson planning</p>
<p>February 2, 2011 Wednesday</p> <p>[Parent] showed up to observe the class today. I was a little nervous with him being there. I wanted to make a good impression. I did a lesson with some simple conjugation of neet'ihthan</p>	<p>Green</p> <p>Orange</p>	<p>Community Emotions</p>	<p>I am glad this parent takes the language seriously enough to go out of his way to check on the class and how I am teaching it.</p>

Key points in the data are marked by a series of codes, which are taken from the text of the data. These codes are grouped by concepts, and then gathered into categories. In Table 5 above I have included some sample journal entries to show how they were coded during the analysis of my data. There could be many themes that appear in a section of writing, and there might be overlap within a single sentence with several codes represented.

I transcribed my teacher journal entries into a single document to which I added line numbers. For inter-rater reliability, this data was analyzed by my advisor and myself, after which we met and discussed what we observed. This process was repeated with the data from student journals and exit interviews. This process of data analysis began to reveal emergent themes. These themes were prioritized by how often they appeared in the data. Subthemes were identified and grouped by how related they were to the main themes. Multiple points of view formed from the data itself created a picture of the classroom and captured my experiences and the students' experiences during this research. In the next chapter I will discuss my findings from the themes that emerged.

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS

Oozhòk khik neehihdik gehzhàk tr'iizhii goo shizhìt najat aanajì ts'a' gwazhaq
tr'eegwàltr'àt. I went down there farther than I usually go, but I became afraid
and hurried back up. ~John Fredson, Tr'ookit Nan Iltsajì (1982, pp. 68-69)

Introduction

In the Gwich'in creation story the world was only water. There was no land anywhere. Floating along with the currents is a raft, and on that raft are a man and a little muskrat. After floating for a long time the man tells the muskrat to dive down and bring back some dirt so that land may be made. The muskrat agrees, and dives down into the depths, entering into complete darkness. He becomes afraid and swims back to the surface. It takes three attempts before the muskrat reaches the bottom, and returns with dirt from which the land is made.

Analyzing research data can be a fearful process. As we dive down into the data, we are not sure what we will find. We ask ourselves “Did I collect enough data? Is it good data? What will I find when I truly look into the mirror of this data?” It isn't until we reach down into this data with our own hands and bring it to the surface that its mysteries can be revealed to us. Like the little muskrat, we have to dive into the darkness and face our fears of the unknown, so that understanding may be created.

Diigwandak, the title of this thesis, is Gwich'in for “our story.” Our story is who we are, where we come from, our history, our language, and our culture. I am a part of the story of the Gwich'in language, my students are a part of this story, my grandparents, mom, aunts, uncles, and cousins are a part of this story, our Gwich'in communities are a part of this story. We are all in this story together. The story of the Gwich'in language is a story that is still being told, and it is a story that does not have to end.

In this chapter I look into the stories that emerged from my teacher journal, as well as the stories from my students in their own journals. These stories of everyday life in the classroom will form the bigger picture of our experiences over the course of the semester, and is divided into two sections according to my research questions. I am very interested in learning how I may become a better teacher, and how students experience language learning. The research data I collected provides a way to understand both of these areas. Ideas that emerged from data analysis of my teacher journal, student journals, and exit interviews will be used to address my research questions:

Question 1

- How does a novice teacher experience teaching Gwich'in as an additional language in a High School class?

Question 2

- How do students experience learning Gwich'in as an additional language?

The three themes that were identified from teacher journals were Time, Responsibility, and Technology. Each of these themes had sub-themes such as (a) Time: time in classroom, time to complete projects, disruptions, the passage of time as represented by elders passing; (b) Responsibility: community, emotions, fluency, self-doubt; (c) Technology: highs and lows (see Table 3 below). The teacher's themes and subthemes are interrelated and overlapped with some of the student themes, including Emotions, Responsibility, Fluency, and Technology. In this section I will begin with the theme of Time, and move on to Responsibility. Finally I will discuss the theme of Technology, and its use as part of student engagement and classroom management. I will address that theme and others to answer my second research question in the student section.

Table 6: Emergent Themes

Teacher Themes	
Time	Classroom Period
	Projects
	Disruptions
	Passing of Elders
Responsibility	Community
	Emotions
	Fluency
	Self-Doubt
Technology	Highs
	Lows

Time

Yes, Indian have a time. White Man have a time, that's his watch... Indian people have a time. They know about the morning, and the different seasons of the year... when I first go out with my father, every evening when the sky is clear, he keep track of moon, he keep track of Dipper. Dipper is the Indian time, and the three stars come up early in the morning, that's the Indian time. The first star come up, and then the next star in the east, and the last star come up and the daylight follow it. So my father, he look at the star, they call it Vats'a' Gach'ahaajil. ~David Salmon (1992)

There are different conceptions of time from culture to culture. In the Gwich'in culture time connects directly to the natural world. For Gwich'in people, time is an expression of the stars above, the seasons of the year, and the different stages of life we enter. Gwich'in people traditionally lived according to the seasons, following where the game would be abundant at that time of year. A Gwich'in calendar year is divided up into moons named after what is happening in the natural world... Vanan Ch'iighòò: *Moon When The Birds Lay Their Eggs*, Łuk Choo Zhrii: *King Salmon Moon*, Vadzaih Zhrii: *Caribou Moon*, Gwilùu Zhrii: *Moon When The Snow Forms Crust*, etc. (personal communication with Gwich'in language teacher Lillian Garnett, April 17, 2011). In the Western concept of time, we look at a clock or calendar to tell us what time it is, and in schools there are buzzers that alert students and teachers when one class period has ended and another is beginning.

The Greek have two concepts of time, Kronos and Kairos. Kronos is the chronological idea of seconds, minutes, hours, days, into months, and years, and it is this idea of time that governs our modern world. The Gwich'in concept of time more closely resembles Kairos, which Oxford English Dictionary defines as “a propitious moment for decision or action,” that opportune moment when things finally do happen (*retrieved February 18, 2013 from <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/kairos>*). Gwich'in people traditionally lived on the land following our own calendar, but today the pressure on Gwich'in people is to become more mainstream; to complete an education, find a job, and save for eventual retirement. The Western educational system is geared towards different types of objectives than a traditional Gwich'in education, and time is one of the many pressures on the Gwich'in language. Time is not a friend of any endangered language, and so how time is managed in the language classroom can be crucial.

Here I will discuss the emergent theme of time that kept appearing in the data. There were different aspects of time which are here organized according to: (a) Time within a class period, the typical 50-minute period allotted and what could be accomplished within that frame; (b) Time to accomplish projects over the course of the semester; (c) disruptions in the classroom; and d) The passage of time as represented by the passing of elders who speak Gwich'in as their first language. These different aspects of time impact one another. How much is accomplished in a course period affects the timeline for accomplishing the goal of creating individual podcasts and the group project. For an endangered language such as Gwich'in, each elder we lose represents a huge loss on both a personal level and for the language as a whole. The Kronos and the Kairos are always coinciding and colliding. The time in which we want things to happen and the time when they actually do happen can be very different things.

Class Period

Looking back at my syllabus (Figure 4) and my semester plan (Figure 5), I had laid out a road map for how I saw the semester unfolding. I had hoped by having this thoughtfully laid out plan that things would run smoothly and we could easily accomplish the goals I had set for the students. Again, the plan was to spend the first several weeks learning basic introductions, which would then be recorded and shared as podcasts. And the second half of the semester would be devoted to working on a group project of telling the traditional story of Tl'oo Thal. These plans were the product of my sitting alone and working things out in my mind, which when I put them into action began to change almost immediately.

A 50-minute class period really is not a long period of time. As I began to look at the data from my journal, words like “rushed,” “slow down,” and “we ran out of time” appeared

continually. These could be seen as different aspects of time... the time available in a single class period, and time to complete a project over the semester. I fell into the common mistake of many novice teachers, a wish to have students learn as much as they possibly can in as short a time as possible.

It became obvious fairly early in the semester that my plan would have to be flexible, and I would need to allow more time for different things to develop. On the 21st of January I scheduled time to record the students. I thought they had had enough instruction to record the first part of their podcasts, simply “*Shoozhri*’ _____ *oozhii*. _____ *gwats’an ihlii*. *Shiyeeghan* _____ *ts’à’* _____ *goovoozhrii*, _____ *ts’à’* _____ *gwats’an ginlii*. *My name is* _____. *I am from* _____. *My parent’s names are* _____ *and* _____, *and they are from* _____ *and* _____.” We had spent three weeks (or 15 hours) on their introductions, and I thought this would have been enough time for students to be ready. But my journal entry that day showed what happened instead, “I thought this would go very quickly and could easily finish in a half hour with 15 students. In reality I was only able to record 4 students. I felt a little rushed even” (~*Journal entry, January 21, 2011*). For some reason they could very easily say this part of their introduction when called upon in class, but when seated in front of a computer with a microphone on, they really struggled to get through it. In the technology section of my Chapter 2 Literature Review, I had fully expected they as “digital natives” would have no problem with this first task, but the reality was different.

This experience caused me to reconsider the semester plan as I had laid it out. I wanted them to be able to use the language, and also be comfortable in their abilities. For them to do this is not an instantaneous process, but one that would require slowing down and taking the time needed.

Excerpt #2: I'll have to rethink this part. It doesn't do any good for them to simply parrot what I say on a scripted piece of language. I'm doing them a disservice if this is all I expect of them. I think I am going to slow things way down so they can have more practice time before having to produce the language. I noticed they had simple pronunciation errors that would be easily fixed with more time practicing and hearing the language. *~Journal entry, January 21, 2011.*

I decided to postpone producing the podcast from the middle until the end of the semester.

I also discovered the effect class size could have during this semester of teaching. I had previously taught another Gwich'in class at the university with an original enrollment of six in the fall semester, but which had dwindled to three students by the spring semester. If one or even two of the students is absent or tardy in a class of three it greatly affects the dynamics, and can make diligently prepared lesson plans irrelevant, but with a larger class that is rarely a problem.

In one instance with my larger EKCS class, I had them work as a group; they "stood in a circle with students and reviewed their names. They learned their own name and other's. It took the whole 50 minutes, didn't expect it to go that long but it's good they took the time they needed. It gave me an idea of their levels/abilities" (*~Journal Entry, January 10, 2011*). The first student in the circle introduced himself or herself, and where they are from, then the students to their left had to repeat the name and introduce themselves until the last student in the circle had to repeat everyone's introduction. In this exercise the class got a great deal of repetition just by their sheer numbers.

The above quote alludes to the fact that my students were of varying levels and abilities in the language. Some of the students had prior exposure to Gwich'in and could handle some of

the sounds quite easily, while others were completely new and had difficulty with pronunciation or other aspects of the language. This meant I had to be aware of what I was teaching so that it would be challenging to the less experienced learners while not boring the students who understood more. This could create a tension that is hard to manage: “I feel like I have to get it done quickly before they become bored, but really if I take my time and do things well it won’t be boring and would actually be more engaging than rushing through something quickly” (~*Journal entry March 23, 2011*). Ultimately though, I would say that these students were all at a beginning level as speakers despite their different backgrounds, and it would always pay to slow the instruction down and be thorough.

Projects

I had a plan as I began the semester (Figure 8, Appendix C) in which I would divide the semester into two parts. The first part was to be about giving students basic language skills. Students would learn how to introduce themselves, where they are from, where they live, family, likes, and dislikes, after which they would prepare a podcast from what they have learned using Garage Band, which is a sound editing software application on most Apple computers. I also wanted to incorporate blogs in this class in the place of journals so students can record language they have learned, their thoughts, feelings, comments, and I would provide feedback on what they have shared. I thought this would be interactive in a way they normally interact with their own peers via social media such as Facebook.

The second part of the semester I imagined to be about continuing to reinforce the language already learned, learning new language and putting the language to use in a digital storytelling project involving the traditional Gwich’in story *Tl’oo Thal* (mentioned in Chapter 1). The story is very compelling to me for a number of reasons. First of all it is a story with a

lot of humor, important with this age group. Secondly the character of TI'oo Thal is a person caught between languages; he is a language learner, very much like the students. While TI'oo Thal is learning in the direction of English, my students would be learning in the direction of Gwich'in, and I felt there would be some nice parallels back and forth between this character and the students.

In my mind these were reasonable goals to accomplish in the time we had available over the course of the semester. These two projects would provide culturally relevant material for the students but also be technology oriented. I thought it would make for an interactive and interesting semester for the students with just enough challenges to keep boredom from setting in. It was a good plan, but the story that emerged over the course of the semester would be very different.

I had underestimated the time it would take to teach enough language for them to accomplish these projects. In April as students were working on their final projects, I felt an intensified time crunch to deliver the language instruction necessary for them to do their projects without it being an empty jumble of sounds, “Over these three days I felt like I was throwing a lot of language at them, language I knew they would be able to use in their stories. But I probably should have gone slower with them. I know there is only so much time left to complete our projects so I have to cram a lot in while I can” (~*Journal entry April 20, 2011*). The podcast idea had to be postponed until the middle of the semester, and eventually was dropped because of the change in plans during the semester. To tell even a very simple story can require some very complex language.

There were other intervening factors, which I will discuss in the next section *Disruptions*, and I found there would not be enough time to do the TI'oo Thal project I originally had in mind. After talking with the class, it was decided to switch to simpler solo

projects. These projects would be more or less an autobiographical story, but would instead be a digital storytelling project instead of the original podcast idea. I let them know that the stories did not have to be incredibly complex, but something about themselves that they would want to share. I needed them to decide on the types of stories they would be working on so I could teach the language they would need, but the time was slipping away from us.

I felt like the class was stalling in defining the stories they wanted to tell, perhaps out of shyness or indecision, so I had to try a different tactic, “I took the class on a walk today. I had them choose a topic and then five verbs and five adjectives. I explained it “what do you like to do” on the topic, and “describe what you are talking about” (~*Journal entry April 15, 2011*). That day we walked down to the river and I talked with them one on one as we went. It was a beautiful spring day, and they were happy to get outside even as we had to negotiate around half frozen puddles typical of breakup in Alaska. This walk and talk seemed to help them clarify the stories they wanted to tell with their projects.

It was a complex project despite my efforts to keep it simple. In the end not all the students finished their projects due to running out of time. Most of the students did finish, but I still felt even they could have used more time to make improvements on what they had created. Classroom projects are always going to have unexpected developments; disruptions are inevitable.

Disruptions

Disruptions can throw off the best and most careful planning. There was hardly a week during the semester where some unplanned event did not intrude on my class time. Among the disruptions during the semester were: an unannounced pep rally (January 7); students traveling for basketball tournaments (4 days in early semester); a snowshoe race (March 23); a troupe of

Native American dancers (April 8); a Shakespeare performance (May 6); three planned early dismissals; as well as the normal illnesses and other unplanned absences. “Class today was cancelled due to a snowshoe race. I have lost so many Fridays this semester, whether it be to basketball, pep rallies, or dancers visiting that I would not want to teach on a Friday again if I had the choice” (*~journal entry March 25, 2011*).

Figure 8 above shows the number of disruptions over the course of the semester. These disruptions could happen for a number of reasons, but they each had the effect of reducing the overall instructional time available. These events typically happened on Friday afternoons, and if I had known beforehand I would not have chosen Fridays to teach, but maybe Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, or any other combination minus Friday. Out of 60 possible class days, there were 20 days missed due to disruptions.

Today I had plans to have the class sit in a circle and review each other's Gwich'in names. As soon as I got them in a circle an announcement came over the loud speakers about a pep-rally going on in the gym. Attendance of the pep-rally was up to the teachers. I tried to keep the students in class, but I could tell that they were really not there. I asked the class who really wanted to go to the pep rally, and a bunch of hands went up. I asked if anyone wanted to stay in class, and one person kind of raised their hand. I let the students go. I turned and was packing my stuff to leave as well, and when I turned around there were still three students sitting there. Later another student returned from the pep rally. So I ended up with four students that day. I was not sure what to do with them, so I was honest and explained what I had planned, and how it might not work with this small a group, but we would do our best. I was really wishing I

had some sort of back up plan. I asked them what did they really want to learn in Gwich'in. They weren't too talkative as we sat in the circle. I think that maybe they are still shy around me. We ended up looking at different colors, and I showed them first second and third person singular and plural. *~journal entry January 7, 2011*

The above episode shows how an unannounced pep-rally threw all my plans out the window, and my scramble to adjust and make good use of the class time despite the disruption. This was only the first week of class, and disruptions like this one happened quite often through the semester. After this experience, I made sure that I kept backup plans at the ready in case something similar happened again. It is difficult to improvise a language lesson, so it is a good idea to have a number of alternate activities

When you lose one third of your class time to various disruptions, it can change the entire class. If I had those days to work with the students, there could have been so much more accomplished. Some of the disruptions could not be helped, but often times it seemed like the class took second place to other events happening in the school. It can make it impossible to prepare a longer-range plan when things happen unannounced and throw off your whole schedule.

Some disruptions could be pleasant and create a potential learning opportunity, such as the day a moose came to visit our class: "There was a moose outside the window, which was very hard to compete with. I was teaching the vocabulary necessary to play the game "Guess Who." I really ought to have used the opportunity to talk about moose, body parts, etc. The body parts are the same for animals and humans, except for wings, horns etc." (*~Journal entry April 4, 2011*). Sometimes you have an opportunity staring you right in the face, it is just a matter of how you look at an unexpected event whether it is an opportunity or a setback.

Unfortunately there are other disruptions that completely blindside you, and cause you to suspend everything. I will discuss those types of disruptions in the next section.

Passing of Elders

Vettitrinidhunnut	Our loved ones
Kwitshikh gitichochik	Passed on before us
Nyakkwun zut nukotunelhyah	There soon I will see them again
Nitchin sheg rsikoonchyō.	Where there is forever joy.

~Chilig 148, verse 4

McDonald, Takudh Tshah Zit (1881)

On February 17, 2011 a parent of one of the students suddenly and unexpectedly passed away at the age of 59. It was a difficult situation as this parent had been directly involved in the class, and I felt empathy for the student as he was still dealing with the loss of his mother a few years earlier. On January 25 this parent had called me at the university: “[parent] called me on the phone to interrogate my ability to speak Gwich’in. After our conversation, he was apparently satisfied with my abilities in the language. He did say that if he weren’t satisfied he would be all over me telling me off” (~*Journal entry January 25, 2011*). This parent then made a personal visit to the class on February 2, “[parent] showed up to observe the class today. I was a little nervous with him being there. I wanted to make a good impression. I did a lesson with some simple conjugation of neet’ihthan. [verb for like]” (~*Journal entry February 2, 2011*). After he observed the class, I invited him to speak to the students. His speech was very moving as he addressed them first in the Gwich’in language and then in English.

He spoke from his heart, and was truly interested in helping these students in their learning. He was the only parent to personally come and observe the class. I really appreciated that about him, and he reminded me as well to treat the language with respect and care. I wished that more parents would be so passionate about the language to go out of their way to support these young people. I was hoping he would make many more visits to the classroom over the semester, but it was not to be.

Two days after his death, on February 19, 2011, I got a phone call that my mother had passed away in Eagle, Alaska. “My mom passed away today. If I was shocked and sad yesterday, today I am utterly devastated. I do not know how I am going to go on after this” (*~February 19, 2011*). I had spoken with her on the phone the day before, and everything was fine. This was a nightmare I could not wake myself from. After a fitful sleep I would pray that I had only dreamed this was happening, but the reality would still be there. Words cannot describe the sorrow felt by myself, my sister Diana and brother Dion, my sister’s daughter Racheal, and the three great-grandkids Adella, Devin, and Raquel.

We were very fortunate because Native people truly rally around in times of loss, so we did not have to go through this experience alone. There were men building her casket, and women lining it, many people gathering at Saint Matthew’s Episcopal Church for tea, and the phone rang from morning to night with people asking to help in any way they could. Our mother was greatly loved by the community, and they mourned along with us.

There was a great windstorm for a solid week after these two deaths. Trees were nearly blown to the ground. We had to wait for days for mom’s body to be flown out of Eagle. The other family could not fly either but had to go by snow-machine to deliver their family member to his final resting place. They were also battling treacherous overflows on the rivers, and

actually fell through the ice several times but still they kept going. What I saw was a testament to the strength of our Native people that do not give up despite hardships.

My mom was someone I could call and ask about the language if I was ever stuck. I would call her several times a week just to talk and practice speaking the language, and she always had answers to my questions. And now I did not know whom I might call on like that. Just six weeks before this all happened I wrote about this very thing: “I have been so aware of the presence of death since I have been trying to teach the language. It is a fearful specter always with us in every moment. The death of the language is represented each time another funeral takes place, funerals of loved ones, relatives” (~*Journal entry January 3, 2011*). I went from teaching and being a student one day to frantically planning funeral arrangements the next. I did not want to believe the words that were coming out of my own mouth as I made arrangements with clergy, funeral directors, friends, and family.

The two losses one after the other had a profound effect on our class, and how the rest of the semester would play out. The student who lost his father ended up not finishing the semester, and missed his graduation. He has since graduated, but it was a personal challenge. I could definitely relate as I found it difficult to continue on with the writing of this thesis. No matter what we do in life, there is no “getting back to normal” after the losses we experienced. This situation also pointed out for me the urgent need to continue working at passing on our language. Each year we lose more of our speakers, and while it can at times feel overwhelming, it is important to still go forward. The first week after my mom died, it was a whirlwind of preparations and I did my best to handle the arrangements correctly. The second week I fell apart after getting past the burial. By the third week I resolved to get back into the classroom.

I knew at this point I was teaching the students more than just language, but also how to handle the adversity that life could throw your way. My mother was a fun loving person in life,

and she would not want a big sorrowful production made. I knew there were others in the class who had also experienced their own losses, and so it was important to not let this destroy what we had begun together. I went back to the class on Monday March 7, but I was still not at full strength, and all I could do was show a video of the 1988 Gwich'in Gathering held in Arctic Village. It is a moving document of that time, and in the film there are so many of our elders who have since passed on. I find it most inspiring because there is hardly a word of English spoken in the whole documentary.

I fell ill in the two days before spring break, and by the time we reconvened after the break it had been roughly a month since we last had a regular class. We had lost seven days of instruction, which is just over two weeks, but it seemed longer because of spring break also falling within this timeframe. The students had forgotten much of what we had covered and needed a review: "For class today I had students come to the white board and write everything they remember learning over the course of the semester. I wanted to see how much they were retaining. It actually became a good exercise, as students were reminding each other of different terms we've covered so far. They covered the entire board before too long" (~*Journal entry March 30, 2011*). The students seemed surprised at how much they did remember, and I sensed their pride as they realized they were retaining the language.

Our Gwich'in elders mean the world to us. They comfort us, and show us the way. They sang us to sleep as children, and now we find we are singing them into the next world. Daagoo shares a memory of her departed grandmother: "My late grandmother used to sing [me] the *Sweet By and By* song to sleep. Back then I also used to know it. But since I moved and she passed, I forgot. So I am really excited to learn songs" (~*January 7, 2011*). It cannot be overstated how important our elders are to us. We miss them first as mothers, fathers, uncles, aunts, and grandparents. It is only in their absence that we realize the impact on our language.

Time is a good storyteller ~Irish Proverb

The thing about time is it is forever changing, a moving target. If we are able to be effective managers, time can be an ally for a teacher. If it is not managed, time can be a source of constant frustration. “Life is short and we only have so much time to make our contribution to society, so we must make the most of the time we have” (~*journal entry April 15, 2011*). At the same time, time is forever an uncontrollable variable, as we do not know what the future will bring us. We can be very effective time managers, and have beautifully laid plans for how we want our class to unfold, but time has its way of changing everything.

Responsibility

Diiginjik k’yaa gwiintl’oo reeheel’ee t’oonch’yaa. We hold our language in a place of high respect. ~*Martha Folden*

As a novice teacher of Gwich’in, I feel a great sense of responsibility each time I attempt to communicate with my students. Sometimes when I have tried to get them to understand different concepts in the language, it can feel like telling a story that goes over their head, and I often feel like saying “you had to be there.” The students cannot understand something exactly the same as I might, and vice-versa. I had learned Gwich’in growing up surrounded by speakers in Arctic Village. I was immersed in the language everyday in all sorts of situations, emotional states, and different types of conversations.

Now I was alone before a class, and I wondered how I could possibly stand in for all those people I had learned from, but I am motivated by my desire to keep the language going. “I want to continue telling our story, not only for the purposes of entertainment, but to renew our spirits... to make our culture and language come to life again, not only onstage, but in the lives of our young people today” (~*Journal entry December 1, 2010*). I want students to love

the language as much as I do. So it is a great responsibility to communicate to students all that the language means to me and to our people... to teach them not only about the language, but how to use it in their own lives and make it their own. Of course I wanted to teach them correctly, and share what I know as much as possible.

I will now discuss the subthemes within the theme of Responsibility. I have identified Community, Fluency, Emotions, and Self-Doubt as subthemes. I have a responsibility to the community of Gwich'in speakers to teach the language correctly. How I teach the language will be how it is spoken in the future, which magnifies my responsibility as a teacher. In order to teach the language correctly I have to make sure I strengthen my own fluency. The last thing I want to do is teach the language incorrectly. I often consult with more fluent speakers from the community through in person meetings, and phone calls. The high stakes involved have often made my experience of teaching Gwich'in very emotional, and caused me more than several episodes of self-doubt as to whether I am able to meet the challenge. Responsibility is not to be taken lightly, and bearing that responsibility is a constant ongoing effort.

Community

For myself as a teacher of the Gwich'in language, before I even walk in the door I have connections to each and every student because of how small our community is. I was directly related to two of my students: two of my first cousins had daughters in my class. One of the students was the granddaughter of my first Gwich'in language teacher. I went to 9th grade at Lathrop High School with the father of another student, and then within the class, students had connections with one another. We were all related and connected to each other in one way or another. These kinds of close relationships are unavoidable when you have such a small speech

community. I would imagine this is not the case when a Spanish or French teacher walks into their classroom.

I also felt I was being closely observed by the Gwich'in community. When I would teach something to my students, there would sometimes be immediate feedback from Gwich'in speakers, and even a late night phone call or two. On December 4, 2010 I received a phone call at 2 o'clock in the morning from a cousin with whom I grew up. She was venting and accused me of "putting Han Gwich'in into our language," and basically said that I was destroying the language with my lessons. The next day my journal entry showed the effect this had on me, "Was still mostly depressed about the call from XXXXX. The part that began to bother me the most is she said "nagahnyaa" which is "they say of you," so I began to imagine all the people who would accuse me of ruining the language" (~*journal entry December 5, 2010*). The average French or Spanish teacher probably doesn't get these types of phone calls.

There are also complex family dynamics in the class. One of my early units had to do with family kinship terms. I thought it was a safe subject, but I found out otherwise once I began the lesson.

Excerpt #3: Today our class went completely awry in very interesting ways. I have been teaching them family and kinship terms, and becoming aware that there are many complex issues at play in the subject. These kids come from different backgrounds, and may have difficulties with parents, or other family members. I was simply looking to teach grandparents, parents, and siblings... One student had recently lost his mother, so he did not want to talk about this subject. Another student said she was adopted and didn't know her family.
~*Journal entry January 19, 2011.*

I made the mistake of asking one student to talk about her aunties and uncles when she had recently lost an aunt. I was thinking ‘I should not be asking her to talk about this’ as the words were already coming out of my mouth. The worst part is that it was my first cousin who had passed the previous fall, and I should have caught myself. I guess it is never safe to assume a subject in class is harmless.

I mentioned earlier the parent visiting my class to make sure I was teaching it right. It is just a fact that when someone does anything with our language, they are going to get feedback (both positive and negative). Language is a highly charged subject for most of us, particularly when it is an endangered language. People just naturally feel a personal connection with the language and emotions tend to run very high. It does take bravery to step into the arena of language revitalization and fight the good fight. Often those who criticize are the ones sitting back and not doing anything themselves, so it is important to consider the source. If the criticism comes from someone I respect and they are also doing their part on behalf of the language, then I would absorb what they have to say and make improvements where I could. But no matter where the criticism comes from it is always important to take it in a positive way, because the motivation is usually out of genuine concern.

Emotions

Because of this responsibility I was feeling, and the desire to live up to and surpass expectations from the community, there were a great many emotions that surfaced during my teaching. “It gets pretty profound very quickly, all sorts of emotions surface in the process, realizations, discovery, echoes of the past come alive, things I heard spoken, the language coming to life again in a new generation” (~*Journal entry January 3, 2011*). Words relating to emotions that appeared in my journal entries included “depressed, nervous, shocked, devastated,

terrified, happy, sorrow, pain, loss, excited, joy, impressed, sad, exhausted, tired, grieving.”

Emotions can be both positive and negative, sometimes within the same moment, and it is crucial to strike a balance between the rough and the smooth.

When emotions become involved it can be a challenge to maintain perspective. I found that a slight setback or criticism could send me into an emotional tailspin. It takes emotional energy to rebound from even a small matter like a lesson plan that did not quite work out as I had thought it would. Or it could be the grand overarching emotion of taking on a new challenge in life, such as teaching.

Excerpt #4: It's interesting my first year of teaching I was so terrified. I don't want to have that experience again. It doesn't serve anyone to live in fear. It's ok to feel fear, but move past it and act with full faith that there is a greater plan, even if you don't fully understand what that plan is at the present moment.

All will be revealed in time. ~*Journal entry January 6, 2011*

That spring semester of 2011 would have been an emotional gamut in and of itself, but with the death of my mother it became the most extreme emotional period of my life. Some emotions you do not even know exist until you find yourself experiencing their throes. The worst possible choice is to shut down emotions. Though the emotions can be overwhelming, it is important for me to fully experience them. It may be my background as an actor, as someone who had to have emotional openness for my line of work, but I am an especially emotional person. When you are an actor it is necessary to draw on emotions to drive your work, but emotions are anathema as an academic conducting research. For myself, I have had to find a balance between the necessary emotional motivation and the ability to step back from emotions to see the bigger picture.

Amid all these emotional tumbles, I discovered another unexpected surprise. Instead of being this overwhelming burden of responsibility to single-handedly revitalize the language, that really “There is something in this for me as well. I am not just the one ‘giving life’ to our language, but it is a two way street... perhaps it will give me life in return” (*~Journal entry January 3, 2011*). When I am feeling exhausted or lacking drive, I try to remember the language is where I can find fuel to persevere through the many challenges of being a language teacher and learner.

Fluency

I have to say I am a learner here as well, because although I might speak better than many people younger than me, I still have much to learn from those older than me, “I’ll be the first to admit I am not the most fluent speaker in the world” (*~Journal entry December 7, 2010*). Language is a complex, living, and breathing part of the speakers themselves. I have heard elders speaking and using a shortcut that conveys an entire part of the story they do not have to verbalize literally because it is based on a shared understanding with the other speaker.

This is a very advanced form of the language, beyond the scope of what I try to do: “The Gwich’in I strive to teach at this point is only the very beginning Gwich’in: colors, numbers, emotional states, adjectives, clothing, hunting, basic conversation, etc. It isn’t advanced Gwich’in, which I would disqualify myself from teaching” (*~Journal entry December 7, 2010*). There are aspects to the language that are very complicated, and it is difficult to improve those areas unless I seek out other speakers and try to stay in the language when we are speaking. I can embarrass myself in a room of Gwich’in speakers, but I can also impress. I always enjoy the opportunity and the challenge to improve myself in the language.

Self-Doubt

Looking through my journals, I could see a great deal of self-doubt appear. From the first day of class my self-doubt can be seen in the journal entry “I was very nervous. I think it went relatively well, but could have been more confident. It is so nerve wracking” (*~journal entry January 4, 2011*). As I look back on my experience now, I recall an overall sense of nervousness. I have performed in front of thousands of people in my life, but I never was so nervous as I was standing in front of a few students

I wish I had taken blood pressure samples before, during and after a class period. I think it would probably show a huge spike in the afternoons on class days. Sometimes it could continue on into the evenings, and even wake me up in the middle of the night. I would often wake up at 3 a.m. and not be able to get back to sleep because my mind would be racing with thoughts about my class. The rest of the world, including my students, probably were not aware of the nights I went sleepless thinking about this class and how I could improve it.

A certain level of self-doubt is healthy. Self-doubt allows us to ask questions of ourselves as teachers, and keeps us grounded in a sense. But too much self-doubt is a paralyzing condition, a la Shakespeare’s conflicted hero Hamlet. If Hamlet spends too much time in self-doubt then he misses the opportunity to do the right thing. So eventually he has to stop asking questions and act on his instincts of right and wrong. He can never be sure if he is making the right choice until after he has acted. Similarly for me as a teacher, I have to make a choice and go with it instead of asking questions to the point where I do not move forward.

Technology

In this section I will discuss my experience of using technology in my classroom. I had hoped to use technology as a way to engage students, as a task-based learning strategy under a

communicative language teaching umbrella. I discovered that while there are definite benefits to using technology in the classroom, there were also some drawbacks. My plan was to have two projects during the course of the semester that involved technology. The first was to create a podcast in which they would give a basic introduction of themselves.

I described in a previous section how that plan went somewhat awry. It was not due to the technology itself but other intervening factors. I had hoped that by using technology we could communicate to other Gwich'in language classrooms: "I decided to use a digital storytelling project to finish out the semester. I brought in several examples off of YouTube for the students to see what it is they will be doing" (*~journal entry March 30, 2011*). The videos I referred to were created by YouTube user "OurWorldLanguage," and can be found at the following url: <http://www.youtube.com/user/OurWorldLanguage>. The videos featured students in Old Crow, Canada, and my students were excited they were able to understand what their counterparts across the border were saying.

Highs

I used emoticons to teach emotions to the students (Appendices F & G). Emoticons are the little smiley or other types of faces used to express emotions when texting on mobile devices or chatting online. Most people might recognize the smiley face "=:)" but there are an almost endless number of different possibilities to convey a wide range of emotional states. The creativity of these emoticons allow for a nuanced expression of human emotions in a medium that can be limited. For an idea of the different possibilities, please peruse this site: <http://www.netlingo.com/smileys.php>. I wanted to go further with this concept and add details to the different characters, such as gender or personality traits, but perhaps I will in future projects.

It was exciting when we finally began to work with iMovie (which is a basic video editing software application on Apple computers) on their different projects: “I’m really impressed with how the video projects are coming together” (*~journal entry May 12, 2011*). I felt like I was beginning to see more possibilities I had not anticipated, and my imagination was inspired by what the students were creating. The process of editing allowed the students to engage with the language in a different way than in the regular classroom.

Excerpt #5: One thing I have noticed as they are working on their projects is the amount of practice they are getting hearing the language over and over as they edit their projects. Some of the students are very engaged in finishing their projects and others are not so much. I had hoped we could be completely done by today and have a showing of everyone’s projects but that is not going to happen. I had considered just showing them in the state they are in at this point but that didn’t really work out either. *~journal entry May 16, 2011*

The student projects were in various states of completion by the time the semester came to an end. We could have used more time to work on their projects. The clock just ran out of time on us. I would have liked for the students to have a showing so that they could highlight their accomplishment, and also so they could give each other feedback. I was looking forward to the peer assessment, to see how that would work, but I did not get the chance to do this.

I discovered I needed time after the completion of the projects to debrief with my students and get their feedback on how the process worked. As a novice teacher I tended to make mistakes like these, but it gives me something to work on in the future.

Lows

At the end of the semester I went to move the digital storytelling projects from the computers where the students had been working. I clicked and dragged the projects to an external drive, but what I did not know was I had only moved the skeleton of the projects. What I needed to do was to “publish” or “share” the projects to my external drive, otherwise I would be leaving all the audio and video of their projects on the computer. I was a little frustrated with myself that I had lost the projects they had worked so diligently on. Thankfully it was only a temporary loss, and I was able to return to the computer lab and retrieve the projects, but if the school had wiped clean the computers after the semester I would have lost them for sure.

There were also mistakes in the finished projects, with some inaccuracies that I would change next time. One of the students had a project involving her friend:

Excerpt #6:

1. Shoozhri' Lidii T'an oozhii,
My name is Tea Leaf
2. ants'a' chan Kheegwaak'ik shagahnyaa.
and they also call me Chatterbox.
3. Tanan gwats'an ihlii.
I am from Fairbanks.
4. Shijyaa voozhri' Nich'it oozhii,
My friend's name is Girl,
5. ants'a' chan Zhoh Zhuu varahnyaa.
and we also call her Baby Wolf
6. Vihtajii gwats'an nilii.
She is from Venetie.
7. Nihlaa Effie Kokrine school tr'ahtsii.
We go to school together at Effie Kokrine.
8. Nihlaa nehkaii haa tseerii'in, ants'a' chan nihlaa agwaraa'ee.
We play basketball together, and we study together.
9. Gehtak lafoo tr'inlii.
Sometimes we are silly.
10. Nandalahch'yaa nilii, vigwizhi' chan gwanlii.
She is pretty and also intellingent.
11. Khan aagal, ts'a' khit shits'inyaa.
She runs fast and she always helps me.

12. Gwiintl'oo veet'ihthan t'oonch'yaa.
I like my friend very much.
13. Khit nihlaareedlaa.
We are always laughing at each other.
14. Vihtsai'.
I treasure her.
15. Ako' t'ee.
That's it.

I have to accept responsibility for a grammatical error in Lidii T'an's story. On line 13 “Khit nihlaareedlaa.” is meant to be “We are always laughing together,” but instead it says “We are always laughing at each other.” I had this feedback from other Gwich'in speakers when I shared the video. I try to always double check on any content I share with students, but it is not always possible and I end up making mistakes. It is especially important before recording video or audio to double check grammar, because once it has been recorded it is harder to correct.

It was also obvious that simple pronunciation errors could have been addressed with more time in the classroom before recording. Some of the sounds in Gwich'in are difficult for those who do not speak the language:

Excerpt #7: They actually had some trouble recording for whatever reason. I think it was having the microphone on and they suddenly became shy about it. Nich'it had trouble hearing the difference between plain and glottalized consonants. She would glottalize almost universally where she didn't need to. I tried to model the difference between ts' and ts sounds, but after a while I realized she just couldn't hear the difference and I didn't want to keep hammering at it. ~journal entry May 6, 2011

Some practice runs on the recording process would probably help students be more comfortable with what they are saying, and it also would give the instructor time to provide feedback.

The themes and subthemes I have explored here have helped to answer my first question, “How does a novice teacher experience teaching Gwich’in as an additional language in a High School class?” To answer my second research question, “How do students experience learning Gwich’in as an additional language?” I looked to student journal entries, exit interviews, class writing assignments, and their digital storytelling projects. I grouped their data into two themes, (1) Goals, and (2) Technology, which then had subthemes of Responsibility, Community, Emotions, High and Low Points. In analyzing the student data I discovered there was some overlap with themes from my own data. This was an interesting development that I had not expected.

Table 7: Student Data

Theme	Subtheme
Goals	<i>Responsibility</i>
	<i>Community</i>
	<i>Emotions</i>
Technology	<i>High Points</i>
	<i>Low Points</i>

Goals

The first week of the semester I rolled out a large yellow piece of paper and asked the students to write down their personal goals for the semester, any words they would like to learn, what they hoped to get out of the class, and any other thoughts they might want to share. Some of their stated goals included:

- “My goal is to speak Gwich’in to my elders, it will bring smiles to everyone.” ~Nich’it

- “My goal is to speak a Native language and make the elders proud.” ~Shoh Ki’

Wanting to learn how to say:

- “What are you going to do later? I love you!” ~Yahdii
- “...to speak this language so I can carry on Gwich’in.” ~Ch’akheetsuu
- “Fully speak my introduction that adds everything. I also want to finally speak Gwich’in with my dad and elders (or at least fully know what they are talking about), and teach it to others.” ~Daagoo
- “My goal is to speak a conversation at the end of the semester.” ~Khehkwaii

By looking at what goals these students had I saw that they wanted to be able to communicate and connect in some basic ways. Students expressed that they want to make their elders proud, and to be able to carry on the language. Because of the rapid pace of language shift, it has created a gap between generations. It is not uncommon for the grandparents in a household to be first language Gwich’in speakers with limited English, and their own grandchildren first language English speakers with limited to no Gwich’in language ability. This makes it nearly impossible to hold a mutually intelligible conversation, and creates misunderstandings and frustration for both elders and youth.

It can be difficult to overcome this barrier, and oftentimes it can result in both groups not maintaining the effort. I have seen where two fluent elders will be carrying on a conversation in Gwich’in but then switch to English as soon as a young person enters the conversation. Young people do want to learn the language, but often have limited opportunities to actually engage in conversation and communicate their ideas with speakers. A learner can be

criticized for making mistakes in pronunciation or using the wrong words. Such criticism can impede their learning if they stop putting in the effort to speak in Gwich'in.

Responsibility

From what the students wrote in their journals and in exit interviews, they do take seriously the responsibility of learning Gwich'in. Nich'it shared her desire for learning, adding, "hopefully I can be more fluent like that when I get older" (*~Nich'it exit interview*). They connected their learning the language and its survival, "because the language itself is kind of going away, we need to revive it and bring it back" (*~Shoh Ki' exit interview*). And they also appreciate the opportunity to learn: "I am looking forward to class this semester. I would say that I still remember some of the things we learned from this past summer" (*~Lidii T'an, January 10, 2011*). Daagoo was very glad to be able to study the Gwich'in language: "All the rest of my classes today was just like 'Here's some paper, do your homework!' But the Gwich'in class makes my day" (*~Daagoo journal entry January 4, 2011*).

Sometimes I would be unsure if the students were paying attention, but they could surprise me: "I know that you feel we weren't learning, but as far as me and Nich'it we practice with each other and on our own. It helps when we know how to say things that we use a lot, thank you for teaching us" (*~Lidii T'an, January 18, 2011*). On another occasion a student was on his iPad through most of the class, but I chose to allow the student to use his iPad rather than shut him down. At the end of the class he showed me that he had taken detailed notes of everything I taught them that day.

When asked for advice to other learners of Gwich'in, students shared "Be patient, you'll catch on more if you listen more. And mostly just bring all your attention" (*Nich'it exit interview*); "It takes a lot of practice, but if you keep trying it comes easier" (*~Lidii T'an exit*

interview); and “they should start, keep on learning it, keep the language going” (~*Khehkawai exit interview*). And their advice for speakers of Gwich’in: “I’d like to learn more” (~*Ndaalahch ’yaa exit interview*); “it’s good that they know that, they should pass it on” (~*Lidii T’an exit interview*); “Hopefully I can be more fluent like that when I am older” (~*Nich ’it exit interview*). We can learn a great deal if we listen to what young people have to say about the language.

I often sought out their opinions on what was happening in class. Nich ’it had good advice for me in dealing with distractions in class: “Start taking cell phones and iPods. Put your foot down. Don’t be afraid of being liked or disliked. You’re a teacher, it’ll be fine. You’re a great teacher” (~*Nich ’it journal entry February 9, 2011*). She also shared “Sometimes you got to tell them to quiet down. I’m here to learn and give it my all” (~*Nich ’it journal entry January 21, 2011*). Sometimes I felt like I did not want to force the students to learn, but if they were distracting others from learning, then it had to be addressed immediately. The students want to learn, and often feel the same about distractions as teachers do.

Excerpt #8: I like the way you’re teaching. I think it’s mostly the students that ultimately choose to learn or not. It’s not you at all. I think we don’t really pay attention mostly because other teachers let us text and talk. But I am learning something new everyday and I enjoy learning the language. ~*Ndaalahch ’yaa journal entry, February 16, 2011*

These High School students do feel a sense of responsibility, perhaps more than adults would give them credit for.

Community

My students are a part of the Gwich'in community, and their journal entries speak about those connections: "I think I am going to love this class. I know a lot of Gwich'in, I listen and understand most of it. My whole family gave me no choice but to listen and learn. I'm looking forward to this class" (*~Nich 'it journal entry January 7, 2011*). Often their motivation for being in the class is to be able to communicate with their families, and particularly their grandparents. When it comes to parents, sometimes the students are teaching their parents about the language: "One time I told my dad how I introduce myself and he said 'all that for just "my name is Ndaalahch'yaa"?''" (*~journal entry January 21, 2011*). The students are also teaching one another, in the community they have created in the classroom: "Yesterday I was helping a lot with their names and intro. I was helping Ndaalahch'yaa, Yahdii, and Lidii T'an. It was fun today because we learned to introduce our parents" (*~Nich 'it journal entry January 26, 2011*)¹.

Their journal entries reveal their relationships, and sometimes the Gwich'in sense of humor: "I like practicing with my family. Listening to my dad is funny because he says a lot of words that are mean or insulting but I wouldn't say any of it. My family's funny that way" (*~Nich 'it journal entry January 31, 2011*)¹. The situations are not always easy: "Today Yahdii didn't want to participate because his mom is passed away. He doesn't really like talking about his family" (*~Ndaalahch'yaa journal entry February 2, 2011*). All community and family relations in every culture are complicated, but family is our strongest support: "My family really wants me to learn this, and I really do too" (*~Nich 'it journal entry February 2, 2011*).

The language provides the students a way to connect with their elders: "Sometimes I ask my dad how to say certain things, and sometimes he doesn't know. My grandpa and him speak sort of the old type, kind you barely hear nowadays. It's pretty cool though, they tell me

stories of back then. Makes me miss Venetie more and more” (~*Nich’it journal entry February 2, 2011*).

It is good to see the students when they are able to understand more of the language. Sometimes they are not able to find a person who will explain the language, so they can sometimes have misunderstandings about what they are hearing.

I learned today how to properly say my Gwich’in name and ask where and who the person is. I also learned this whole time I been saying where I’m from kind of wrong. So I learned more than I expected today. Also hopefully by tomorrow I would know my Gwich’in name. One question I have is when will we start learning how to say our parents, where they’re from and our grandparents, and where they’re from? ~Daagoo journal entry January 6, 2011

Looking at Gwich’in community we can see the signs of language loss: “That’s how my aunt and uncles were. Could understand but not speak it well. My uncle and aunt caught on fast. My grandma and I are practicing everyday, and she talks to me a lot in Gwich’in so I’m getting more and more used to it” (~*Nich’it journal entry February 16, 2011*). There are quite a few who are able to hear the language, but usually respond in English, but these students are excited to be able to learn what they can: “That was good to learn how to say grandma and grandpa. I can start saying that now. We should try to introduce ourselves and our parents” (~*Yahdii journal entry January 13, 2011*).

I know what some people are talking about. I grew up back and forth from the village to the city. But I have been around it and grew up around it. Mostly from my grandmother and father. I already know some words and how to

introduce myself. I just need to add in my parents and grandparents and where they're from. ~*Daagoo journal entry February 2, 2011*

It is encouraging that though there is definitely language loss happening, still there is a connection being kept alive: "My grandmother calls me Sekoyuka' or something close. I spelt it phonetically. It's Athabascan and I think it means grandson. I didn't notice a close similarity to grandson in Gwich'in, but it sort of resembled young man" (~*Shoh Ki' journal entry March 23, 2011*). As I have assembled all their references to family in relation to Gwich'in language, I cannot help but notice that they are all speaking about their grandparents as speakers rather than their parents. Most of the students are a generation removed from first language Gwich'in speakers.

Emotions

The students showed a great deal of excitement to be learning Gwich'in. Early on in the semester one student felt the class stood out on her class schedule: "All the rest of my classes today was just like 'here's some paper, do your homework.' But the Gwich'in class makes my day" (~*Daagoo, January 5, 2011*). Not many of them had formal instruction in the language before; they were glad to be learning more and that it was being offered at EKCS: "I think I am going to love this class. I know a lot of Gwich'in, I listen and understand most of it. My whole family gave me no choice but to listen and learn. I'm looking forward to this class" (~*Nich'it, January 5, 2011*).

Technology

The technology I had built into the semester plan was primarily Apple's Garage Band and iMovie. My intention was to have two class projects involving technology. The first half of the semester I wanted to have the students create podcasts introducing themselves, and then

in the second half they would work together on a traditional storytelling project. The first project ended up not happening due to circumstances (the two deaths), and then the second project changed from a full dramatic staging of the Ti'oo Thal story to student digital storytelling projects. These digital storytelling projects would include their introductions and then a simple story that they created.

High Points

The responses to the exit interview question *How do you feel the technology (podcasts, iMovie) helped your learning of Gwich'in?* showed varying levels of insight and interest. Some of the students felt that preparing these projects was a good thing: "...[it] helped with reviewing what we went through, researching what you did and putting it on the video. I like it, it's good" (~Khehkwaii exit interview). Other students felt that it was a way to connect to other students in other schools, "It was fun making little projects, 'cause we watched a couple of YouTube videos, and it was really cool" (~Ndaalahch'yaa exit interview). The YouTube videos she refers to above were ones I had shown the class, which Gwich'in students from Old Crow School in Yukon Territory, Canada had produced in the language. One of the students was excited she was able to understand what these other kids were saying in a Canadian dialect of Gwich'in: "I like it because I saw a couple of digital movies online, and I could recognize the stories and it's pretty cool hearing it from other kids" (~Nich'it exit interview).

Some of the students felt that the project helped them learn the language: "It's something that kind of puts you on the spot, makes you stand up there and actually say it, so it makes it so you can learn it better" (~Shoh Ki' exit interview). They could also see the benefits of working on editing a project: "I thought it was really cool putting them together, because

then we really had to understand what something meant to make sure it fit right into our movie” (~*Lidii T’an exit interview*).

Low Points

There was an aspect of these projects that presented a problem for the students and that was they would be recording themselves. I did not anticipate students being reluctant to record themselves. Many people do not like the way they sound on a recording, and it is also something like writing in ink rather than pencil. Nich’it had something to say on this challenge: “Probably writing it, and maybe talking on camera. Like, at my house I can speak it loud and clear and I remember everything, and I get really shy around cameras and I’m not really the best at spelling it either” (~*exit interview, May 9, 2011*). The technology is fun to work with, but it can present an additional challenge over simply learning a language. When recording themselves, they have a desire to speak correctly, which then puts the focus on pronunciation instead of understanding.

Ndaalahch’yaa echoed Nich’it in her concern with recording herself: “For the podcast I’m kind of self conscious of how I speak” (~*Ndaalahch’yaa journal entry, March 23, 2011*). I found one student had some resistance to telling a personal story, and wanted to have his story be more fictional. Shoh Ki’ handled this by choosing a subject other than himself: “I guess for a topic for my story could be my dog Copper” (~*Journal entry, March 28, 2011*). Having a dog as the subject presented a challenge for me as a teacher, because the verbs for animals are different than those for humans. If you were to use the human verb for running when speaking about a dog or a caribou, it would create a picture in the listener’s mind of that animal running around on two legs instead of four. In animal verbs of walking and running, there is usually no conjugation involved as with human verbs of the same actions. These verbs for animals are

usually locked in third person. If you were to say it in first person, for instance, it would conjure an image of a person loping around on four legs.

The stated Goals of the students formed a theme, and a way to understand their experiences, as did the subthemes of Responsibility Community, Emotions, and the Highs and Lows of Technology. I have tried to gain an insight into students' experiences in the classroom. Their journal entries reveal their thoughts and emotions in the process of learning Gwich'in. In this current chapter I have shown that the student and teacher journals yielded quite a bit of information to sort through.

Summary

The analysis of the research data revealed many different aspects of teaching and learning. Some of the data is more compelling than others, and in Chapter 5 I will talk about my findings and implications.

Chapter 5 Discussion

I set out in this research to describe my experience as a novice teacher, as well as some of the experiences of my students. I shared three major emergent themes of my teacher data: Time, Responsibility, and Technology. Student data revealed Goals, and Technology as the main themes, with Responsibility, Emotions, and Community as subthemes. In this chapter I am going to focus my discussion on what I have learned about responsibility while teaching our ancestral language. Responsibility is shared among all members of the language community; all speakers are teachers.

When I first began to teach Gwich'in language I was motivated by a sense of responsibility to the community, to the elders, and to the students I was trying to teach. I thought I had at least enough knowledge and ability to get my students started on the basics of the language, while recognizing my own need for 1) greater fluency, and knowledge of the essential grammar, and 2) the need to develop as a teacher. It is quite a large claim to say, "I can teach Gwich'in language," but having made that claim I felt I had to give it my best effort. My initial experiences in the classroom were like that of the child in the story with which I began this thesis. I struggled against my own limitations in the language, with second language acquisition theories, and with issues of pedagogy. I will now discuss what I have learned about my responsibility in the areas of fluency and pedagogy.

Fluency

I had essentially fossilized in the language when I left for college, and had forgotten many parts of the language in the intervening years before I began to step into teaching. The insidious part about language loss is that I did not realize how much I was losing, and still considered myself relatively strong in the language. I was amazed rediscovering simple words I

had formerly taken for granted, words like *naazuu* (striped material), *vindee vaatr'oolchi'* (sleepy eyes), or more complex words such as *k'aaojiidhadoo* (late summer as the light from the midnight sun is waning and a fog is settling on the land).

I had a student ask how to say dragonfly, and I had to consult one of our dictionaries: *tl'yah tr'an*. Gwich'in language is very rich, and can describe everything under the sun from soft downy feathers *ch'akheetsuu*, to curling up in bed for a good sleep *t'raanakhahaalzhayaa*. People also employ creative word play, make jokes in the language, tell epic stories, sing songs, weep and mourn, and celebrate the joys of life. There are domains of language such as hunting, tanning hides, sewing, astronomy, spiritual beliefs, or childrearing, that each has its own set of specific language. Essentially there are no limits to the language; if it is within human experience, it has been described in Gwich'in.

One of my favorite stories about Gwich'in language comes from a conversation I had with the late elder Ruth Welsh. Ruth was originally from Teetl'it Zheh, or Fort McPherson, NWT Canada. Ruth had equal love for our Gwich'in language and for the traditional knowledge of medicinal plants and minerals. She knew the healing properties of many different plants from the mountaintops on down to the creek beds in the valleys. She knew when they should be harvested, the proper preparations for each, and the right doses to be administered. Her kind loving spirit endures in several publications for which she served as informant, including *Gwich'in Ethnobotany* (1997) by Alestine Andre, and Alan Fehr, and *The Boreal Herbal: Wild Food and Medicine Plants of the North* (2011) by Beverly Gray.

On one of my visits with Ruth she was recalling the Teetl'it Zheh elders she knew in her youth, and the stories they would tell. She described these elders as they spoke in Gwich'in language; the stories they related would be like a movie running in their minds. The listener would be drawn in and so involved in the world of the story that they could feel the damp

ground beneath their feet, the breezes in the air, and they could hear the birds flying overhead. I too felt myself transported as she told the story. Ruth impressed on me that day our Gwich'in language is a living-breathing thing, just as much as the plants, and animals, and other living things of this world. Language is our living connection to our ancestors, and where we come from as a people.

I try to use the language whenever possible, and make a point of speaking in the language when I interact with other speakers. I often find myself listening intently to each word and trying to etch it into my mind. I have attended workshops in Beaver Diiginjik K'yaa Eegaraa'ee in May 2011, and participated in the 2011 Yukon Flats School District curriculum and materials development in Fort Yukon. At both of these gatherings I felt like I was back in Arctic Village as a child because everyone was speaking Gwich'in language morning, noon, and night. Often in my daily activities here in Fairbanks, I can go an entire day without seeing another speaker. To help myself stay active in the language, I participate in a Takudh singing group. Takudh is the liturgical language used in the Episcopal and Anglican churches of Gwich'in communities in both Alaska and Canada. Other ways I have sought to be active in the language is to seek out other speakers, and if I cannot see them in person, then a phone call is always possible.

Ultimately my fluency level was not my greatest challenge in teaching the language. It is my responsibility to continually develop my proficiency in the language, but I have more than enough ability to teach introductory Gwich'in language. I had passed the test from the parent who came to observe the class. The greatest challenge for me was the teaching act itself. A person can be a completely fluent speaker, but have no ability as a teacher of the language.

Pedagogy

I learned as a novice teacher I have to develop my own identity in the classroom. Kanno and Stuart (2013) reveal that “becoming an L2 teacher is not an experience that takes place overnight for novices; rather, it is a prolonged process in which they gradually develop their understanding of what it means to be a language teacher and become increasingly comfortable with that identity.” In my earliest attempts at teaching, I felt rather overwhelmed and was preoccupied with wanting to do it “right”. It is not uncommon for novice teachers to be overly focused on their teaching acts, while not giving as much attention to instructional content. Many novice teachers go through a process of fumbling, making mistakes, questioning their every decision, before they are able to move beyond this awkward stage and emerge as fully fledged and experienced language teachers.

I learned that students are sometimes just not going to pay attention, and that it is not necessarily evidence of any inadequacy in my teaching abilities. Still it is hard not to take it personally when the situation arises, as seen in this journal entry:

Students were a little distracted today. I had some resistance to getting their attention. Sometimes it makes me sad, it’s already so difficult to teach in ideal situation, but impossible in a situation where attention is not being paid to what I am teaching them. I try not to take it personal, but maybe highlight my point by calling on that student to answer a question about what I had been talking about. I did today and he answered “I wasn’t listening so I don’t know the answer to your question.” I appreciated his honesty, but kind of a bad example for the class. I think maybe it’s the way I am presenting the information, not so much the poor material. A good teacher can make even poor material interesting by the way they present it. ~journal entry January 18, 2011 Tuesday

An important part of the transformation from a novice teacher into a confident and experienced language teacher is assuming a place of authority in the classroom. I am not quite at a place yet where I feel I have become that confident and experienced teacher, but the process of writing this thesis has given me a chance to reflect on where I am at as a teacher, and I have begun to make a few steps in that direction. At first I treated it as more of a negotiation with students, perhaps motivated by a desire to be “liked” by my students.

I don't know about energy in the class. Maybe the pictures help? Start taking cell phones and iPod. Put your foot down. Don't be afraid of being liked or disliked. You're a teacher, it'll be fine. You're a great teacher. ~*Nich'it journal entry February 9, 2011*

I had to grow as a teacher if I wanted to draw the lines of authority in the classroom. Early on I struggled with striking the balance between feeling like an overlord taskmaster, and being a total pushover. Inviting students as collaborators in the learning process, i.e. encouraging learner autonomy, still requires confident direction from a teacher. Without that teacher confidence, an invitation to collaboration can seem instead like asking for students' permission, and taken them as a sign of weakness on the teacher's part.

I have also grown my awareness as an Indigenous language teacher. In the language shift section of my Chapter 2 literature review I described some of the troubled history of Native Americans and schooling. I think it is because of this troubled history that Alaska Native and American Indian students do not flourish in mainstream education as compared to non-Native students. As an Indigenous person I am also a part of that particular history, and not somehow exempt simply because I am in a teacher role. Part of my developing my identity as a teacher is to consider the history of Alaska Natives and education, and how that might affect me

as a teacher. That was not the specific intent of this research but something that occurs to me now as I am looking back.

My mom and others of her generation experienced many hardships as a result of treatment received at boarding schools like Wrangell Institute, and Mount Edgecumbe High School. They were rounded up from their home communities and sent off to these distant schools, where they were beaten for speaking their language and suffered other forms of abuse. My mom graduated from Mount Edgecumbe, but she struggled to finish her undergraduate degree at UAF. She had a goal of becoming a special education teacher, but never realized this dream. As for myself, I did not graduate from high school but rather finished with a G.E.D. I went on to college, and finished my undergraduate degree, but it was a struggle. I feel a responsibility to complete the dream my mother was not able to achieve by finishing the degree program I started. We cannot change the history that has already transpired, but we can choose what we will make happen in the future.

In my literature review I also discussed the different roles of teachers and I identified more as a “guide,” a partner in the learning process, as opposed to a “sage” lecturing from high on a mountaintop. But through the course of the semester I would be tested on my position. My “apprenticeship of observation” had a very strong hold, and I often found myself lecturing from the chalkboard, i.e. a teacher fronted style versus the learner-centered classroom I was striving to create. I was reminded of my undergraduate actor training. Many years ago I was in an audition class, and the professor gave us the assignment of preparing a song. He explicitly said he did not want to see us hanging on the piano, but stepping forward and really engaging the audience. I did not have full confidence in myself as a singer, singing was not something that came naturally to me, so what did I do but cling to the piano. I ended up doing exactly what the professor had warned us against doing.

If I look at my background as an actor and the training I received there I can begin to see parallels. If as a teacher I want to engage and interact with my students I have to step away from any comfort zones, just as an actor I had to get over stage fright and be comfortable in front of the audience. These types of realizations are a part of my own process of negotiating and reshaping my self-concepts as a teacher, (Dornyei, 2005, 2009; Markus & Nurius, 1986). When we start off with any endeavor, we have to be a novice for a period of time before we gain more experience and grow into our new role. It is similar for students as they are novices at learning language; they have an awkward phase until they are able to get more experience with the language and move on to more advanced levels with the language. It is an ongoing process but I will continue to strive towards becoming a better “guide” by applying what I have learned so far, and continuing to learn from experience.

To have the responsibility for the survival of this living-breathing language is not something that should be taken lightly. In order to meet the challenge of this responsibility, I would have to give up being that child struggling through the willows, and step into the adult role of teacher in the story. This research is a part of my journey from being a novice beginner to becoming a more experienced and knowledgeable teacher. Accountability, reliability, trustworthiness, these are all qualities of a responsible teacher.

I have to be accountable to the community of Gwich'in speakers. In Excerpt # 6 on page 92, I shared how one of the digital storytelling projects was not perfect, and had some grammatical mistakes. When I did share this video on YouTube, I had immediate feedback from fluent speakers in the community that this was an improper use of the word *nihlaa*. This was a misunderstanding on my part, and not the students. Each of the projects had different issues, from errors in pronunciation to the subtitles or images not matching exactly with the language being used. But because of these mistakes, I did not feel very comfortable publishing

any more of the videos from the rest of the class. I just did not want to have the students subjected to criticism that might discourage their learning.

I have since reconsidered and will be releasing these projects after all. One of the students in this study (Daagoo) did ask whether they would be published, and I let her know that they would be soon. The digital storytelling projects will be released as one large project rather than individual projects, to diffuse any criticism at any one student. I think I will also preface the project by acknowledging that there are mistakes, but that mistakes are a part of the learning process. Learner language is different than language of native speakers. If someone from outside the community is trying to learn the language, and they inevitably make mistakes, they are generally tolerated. If however, a young person from within the community is not perfect in their speaking ability, they can be heavily criticized.

Criticism is inevitable for anyone learning (or teaching) a second language, but how such criticism is handled can make the difference between recognizing a learning opportunity and ceasing trying to learn at all. If the criticism is warranted, then it is possible to learn from the situation. If it seems that those delivering the criticism are not fully informed, then it is possible to take that criticism with a grain of salt. The episode I referred to earlier that involved the parent visiting my classroom is an example. If I had become defensive and argued with this parent, then it could have been a missed opportunity. Instead I welcomed the parent to ask any questions they liked, and I was open to them visiting the classroom. I try to look at all criticism, whether it is a 2 a.m. phone call, or comments posted on Facebook, as a positive thing that is motivated from a place of genuine concern for the language.

I mentioned in the Chapter 2 section on language shift and reversal that it takes the united efforts of an entire speech community for an endangered language to survive. It is our shared responsibility to do all we can to make sure our language does not become extinct. I feel

that we must create spaces for Gwich'in language to be spoken exclusively. In a lengthy conversation on this subject with a professor, we discussed the Paulston (1994) point of view on language revitalization and language shift. Paulston is very pragmatic in her assessment; she does not believe that revitalization is possible when a minority language has shared institutions with a dominant language. My professor used the analogy of a river as we were discussing shift.

If we imagine English as the Yukon River, and Gwich'in as a small creek or slough, then it is obvious we need to create a protection for that space. If we continue on with the status quo then Gwich'in will most likely be subsumed by English, just as easily as the Yukon could absorb a small creek. But if we were to safeguard this slough, then it becomes more possible to sustain our language. That slough is made out of spaces we create for the language outside the classroom. Many students report that they enjoy learning the language, and want to continue learning, but have very little opportunity outside the classroom to use the language. I still don't see how you incorporated the students' sense of responsibility in this section.

Future Directions

As a result of what I have learned in this research, I have created a new syllabus for a class that I might teach in the future. I would still want my class to have a focus of communicate language teaching (CLT), and I would still want to explore the role of stories further, but I think I would try to achieve the goal differently. I am beginning to make the shift from a novice to a more experienced and confident teacher. Kanno and Stuart (2013) speak about how "identity and practice are mutually constitutive: Practice shapes identity, whereas identity, in turn, affects practice." I see the idea of this cycle as being similar to my Figure 1:

Theory of Practice, they both describe the dynamic process as the novice transforms into an experienced teacher.

INTRODUCTORY GWICH'IN

FALL 2013
EFFIE KOKRINE CHARTER SCHOOL
MW 1:10 – 2:00
F 12:20 – 2:00

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Introductory Gwich'in is a beginning language class focused on developing basic conversational skills. Focus will be on listening to and speaking in Gwich'in language. Students will be required to give regular presentations throughout the course in the target language. Students will also be required to pair with elders and/or other Gwich'in speakers to develop their speaking ability outside of the classroom. Students will conduct interviews with elders and work with instructor to develop material from interviews into a performance at the culmination of the school year.

Student learning Outcomes -Students will be able to:

- Hold basic conversation in a variety of subjects
- Learn grammar relevant to language used
- Collect language material through interviews
- Learn presentation skills
- Plan, collaborate, and perform a dramatic piece from interviews

Readings

Readings will be brought to class by instructor as needed.

Recommended Readings:

Hinton, L. (2002). *How to Keep Your Language Alive*. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books.

Materials

Audio recorder for interviews

Grading Policy:

Participation	20%
Attendance	30%
Midterm	20%
Project	10%
Final Project	20%

Grading Scale

97-100 A+	87-89 B+	77-79 C+	67-69 D+
93-96 A	83-86 B	73-76 C	63-66 D
90-92 A-	80-82 B-	70-72 C	60-62 D-
			0-59 F

Attendance and Participation:

Attendance is important in any language class, but especially in this class. In a language class the focus is on learning from one another by speaking, listening, and engaging in language learning activities. Attendance is required, but participation is just as important. In order for students to learn from one another, there must be active participation in activities, assignments, and presentations.

If you have more than three unexcused absences, you will be docked half a letter grade for each additional unexcused absence.

Dialogue Journals

Students will write daily in journals. Journals are ungraded, there is no right or wrong way to write journal entries, but will count as participation. Topics are not limited but could include what was covered in class that day, what happened, what worked, what did not work, challenges, successes, reflections, questions for instructor, things you would like to learn, etc. I will respond once a week in journal.

Weekly Presentation:

Each student will present before the class each week. These short presentations in the language will help students become accustomed to speaking Gwich'in. Grading for these presentations fall under "participation", and will count for half of that grade (or 10% of total grade). Grading will be based on three areas 1) preparedness, 2) clearness of delivery, and 3) progress and improvement.

Midterm:

There will be a midterm, which will consist of oral and written assessments.

Elders:

Students will pair with elders in a “master/apprentice” model of learning. Students are encouraged to connect with a trusted elder they know in their family or community. If you do not know any speakers of the language, I will work with you on identifying and recruiting an elder to work with. The pairing with elders is meant to give students real life experience and self-directed learning of the language. This component is meant to help you gain a deeper understanding of the language outside the classroom. Many voices are better than one when learning language. Students will be active in creating lessons they are to learn from elders. This language learning partnership will be based on Leanne Hinton’s model described in “How To Keep Your Language Alive”. Students and elders will receive training in this model focused on staying in the language. Weekly presentations in class can be from these elder sessions, and/or in class material covered.

Pairing with elders will be about:

1. Learning language
2. Building cultural knowledge
3. Collecting language material
4. Transcribing interview material
5. Analyzing material
6. Sharing material
7. Sharing what was learned

Students with Documented Disabilities:

If you have specific physical, psychiatric or learning disabilities and require reasonable accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met.

Course Schedule

This schedule may change depending on how fast or slow we make progress. We will periodically revisit this schedule to make any changes necessary.

Week/Unit	Date	Class Topic	Assignments, Vocabulary
1 Self	W 8/21	First Day of School Learn introductions. Sing Doxology	shoozhri’, noozhri’, voozhri’, oozhii
	F 8/23	Introduction to master apprentice model, staying in target language. Learn Doxology	Presentation 1 ~Introduce self
2	M 8/26	Learn family tree, relationships, history	Shalak, shitsuu, shitsii, sheejii, shoondée, shijuu,

Kinship			shachaa, sheek'aii, shee'ii
	W 8/28		
	F 8/30	Interview techniques, how to ask good questions	Presentation 2 ~Introduce self and family
3 Kinship	M 9/2	Labor Day	Shigii, sha'oodde, shakhoo, shijyaa
	W 9/4		
	F 9/6	First listen of interview material	Presentation 3 ~Short Story of Grandparent
4 Stories	M 9/9	Use of stories in Gwich'in culture, history, education	Gwandak, niidai', deenaadai',
	W 9/11		
	F 9/13		Presentation 4 ~Short Story
5 Body Parts	M 9/16	Walking, running, listening, dancing, playing, speaking, swimming	Shiki', Shidzee, Shakwai', Shatth'an, Shigin
	W 9/18		
	F 9/20		Presentation 5 ~Body Parts
6 Adjectives	M 9/23	Describing people and objects	Choo, Tsal, Ch'ok, Ghoo, Ninjyaa, Nagwan, Ch'ildral,
	W 9/25		
	F 9/27	Early Dismissal	
7 Colors	M 9/30	No School	
	W 10/2	Information gap activity, describing and drawing a character	Daagaii, Azhrai, Ch'ahtl'oo, Dats'an Tl'oo, Avey, Atsoo, Atthoo
	F 10/4		Presentation 6 ~Describe Character
8 Review	M 10/7		
	W 10/9		
	F 10/11		Midterm
9 Postpositions	M 10/14	Locations, describe where to find something, give directions	Gwakat, Gwit'ee, Gwant'ii, Geeghaii, Gwikhyuu
	W 10/16		
	F 10/18	Early Dismissal	
10 Emotions	M 10/21	Emotional states, describe how one is feeling	Shoo ihlii, shik'ii gwanlii, lafoo ihlii, oozhii ihlii,
	W 10/23		

	F 10/25		Presentation 7 Describe emotional states
11 Hunting	M 10/28	Parent/Teacher Conference	nalzhrii, nanzhrii, naazhrii, naraazhrii,
	W 10/30	Manner of hunting, hunting beliefs, treatment of animals, butchering, drying, storage	Nin, dinjik, vadzaih, tsee, dzan, zhoh, ch'a'aa, ch'aga'aa, neech'al'aa
	F 11/1		Presentation 8 Describe animals
12 Fishing	M 11/4	Types of fishing, waterways, travel, orientation, directional	Łuk keeshi'in, chihvyaa, chihjol, tr'ih, han, van
	W 11/6		
	F 11/8	Early Dismissal	
13 Clothing	M 11/11	Wearing of clothing, making of clothing, materials	Gwach'aa, ik, ts'eh, ch'adak ik, ch'iyehzhak ik, thał, kwaiitryah, nalzhii, nal'aii, zhidhii'yuu, zhidoljik, dazhoo, lagwadoo,
	W 11/12		K'eechaalkaii
	F 11/13		Presentation 9 Share a clothing item made for you by someone
14 Food	M 11/16	Cooking, preparation, eating of food	Nilii, alvir, keech'alch'yaa, ko',
	W 11/18	Living sentence activity	
	F 11/20		Presentation 10 What is your favorite Native food?
15 Food	M 11/23	Finalized "script" 30 minutes rehearsal	Parts assigned
	W 11/25	30 minutes rehearsal	
	F 11/27	No School Thanksgiving	
16	M 12/2	30 minutes rehearsal	
	W 12/4	30 minutes rehearsal	
	F 12/6	60 minutes rehearsal	
17	M 12/9	30 minutes rehearsal	
	W 12/11	30 minutes rehearsal	
	F 12/13	60 minutes rehearsal	
18	M 12/16	Final Project shared	
	W 12/18	Early Dismissal	

	F 12/20	Native food “potlatch” End of Quarter	
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The first and biggest difference about this new syllabus is I want to make sure to give students more chances to use the language. The weekly presentations will increase their output in the language. By having more opportunities to speak the language, students will have more opportunities to learn the language. By hearing themselves speak, and by hearing their classmates speak, students are able to notice their language in comparison to other speakers and make adjustments where needed. Increased output will also allow them the ability to measure their own progress, and bolster their sense of accomplishment. Nothing encourages learning like success, and this syllabus will allow students to experience success in measurable outcomes.

Assessment is another area that this syllabus is different. I would still involve students in creating assessment measures, because students need to know how they are going to be assessed, but I will also use more assessments through the semester. Similar to the reasons just given, assessments allow students to know whether they are succeeding or falling behind. It lets them know if they are achieving their goals. If a student states that one of their goals is to “speak to my grandparents” or “make elders proud,” assessment will help them know if they are near their goals, or if they are not, then how much work it is going to take to reach their goals.

Project: Pairing w/ Elders

I have in mind a project for this new class that involves pairing students with elders, and/or fluent Gwich’in speakers. The ultimate aim of this project would be to begin to activate students as self-directed learners of the Gwich’in language. As we are moving into a more and more endangered status with our language, we will need learners who are more proactive and willing to go out of their way to learn the language. Once students leave the classroom, how

can they continue to create learning opportunities in the language? The approach for this project is based around Leanne Hinton's work, the master/apprentice model as described in *How to Keep Your Language Alive*. It is crucial that young people begin to develop skills as language learners.

The project would involve students in recording interviews with their elders. Most of the students I had at EKCS had at least one person in their life, whether it was a grandparent or another relative, who was a speaker of Gwich'in. For those who may not have someone they can learn from, I would recruit speakers that I know to work one on one with these students. This project would encourage them to develop both master and apprentice relationships based around language learning. Both masters and apprentices will receive training in how to stay in the target language, and how to create immersion sets to expand the domains of target language.

Interview questions will be semi-structured, with an emphasis on questions that lead to extended answers. It is good to have a combination of prepared questions, and to ask questions as they arise. So, for instance, I might have students ask, "What was your life like when you were my age?" But this question could lead to other questions, and so on. A question like "What does language mean to you?" could get quite a lengthy answer, and the answers would provide many different perspectives coming from the different elders and speakers involved. I would encourage the speakers to answer these questions in the language. The answers from the interviews would form the script students would later perform in the language. Apprentices will learn how to be "hunters" of target language through interviewing speakers/masters.

I see this project culminating in a staged performance with the script being created from the interview materials. Students would act out the stories that their elders shared with them. I was an actor and interviewer with a similar project at Perseverance Theatre. We used the traditional Tlingit story Aak'wtaatseen, or the Salmon Boy, as the central theme, with personal

stories about salmon from interview subjects woven through. The result was a tapestry of stories from the community brought to life onstage by actors. I can see a similar outcome with my students, but I would focus the stories around language.

Creating a Learner-Centered Classroom

There are things a teacher can do to make their classroom more learner centered. A learner-centered classroom incorporates learner input into course design, instruction delivery, development of assessment measures, and focuses on developing overall learner autonomy. Learner autonomy does not necessarily mean letting students do whatever they want while leaving it entirely up to them to decide what they will learn. Rather, learner autonomy is about fostering a learner's ownership of their individual learning process. Learner autonomy is more a means than an end, and moves to focus of the classroom from teaching to learning. The role of the teacher in a learner-centered classroom is more of a guide or facilitator. In this next section I intend to describe activities a teacher can use in creating a more learner centered classroom.

Activities

Pairs & Groups

Having students work in pairs, or groups, versus a more traditional lecture style of teaching is very important in a language class. If the teacher is the one doing all the talking in a language class, then the students are missing out on valuable time they could be practicing their speaking skills. If students are working in pairs, they are each speaking roughly 50% of the time. In groups of three, they are speaking approximately 30% of the time, and in groups of four 25%, etc. But with the teacher speaking most of the time, and perhaps calling on students individually, percentages of student speaking time drops off dramatically.

One of the issues that might come up in working with groups is that a group might end up dominated by stronger students. This problem could be alleviated by pairing the stronger students with other stronger students, or by structuring it so that those students who are stronger in the language could help others along in their learning. I had two students that were particularly shy, and would have trouble speaking up in class, or in groups, so I regularly had them work together. Whereas in a larger group situation these two students were not very outspoken, they did not have this problem so much when working with each other.

Blindfold Activity

This is an activity I have used to help teach theatre to young people. It involves students learning about the elements of good storytelling that are the basis of compelling theatre. It is sometimes known as Hunter & Hunted, and can be used as an information gap language activity. I will first describe the game. The facilitator forms students into a circle, usually sitting. Two students are blindfolded within the circle, and each are then turned around gently to disorient them slightly. While they are doing this, the facilitator asks students to agree on two exits from their circle. One student is chosen to be the “Hunter” and another is designated the “Hunted” by the facilitator dropping a rolled piece of paper into the circle; the first to find that paper becomes the hunter and the other is the hunted. The goal is then for the hunted to find one of the exits before they are tapped with the piece of paper by the hunter.

The game is very suspenseful for all involved, and contains all the essential elements of good theatre, character, spectacle, plot, suspense, and conflict. I would use this game in my class because of the additional aim I have of creating theatre out of the interview material, but it can be repurposed to a solely language learning activity as well. An obstacle course can be created in your classroom in which one student guides another through the course by giving

commands in the language, postpositions (in Gwich'in) such as “under, over, to the left, to the right, next to,” etc.

Another information gap type activity I have used successfully involves students' ability to describe a person in the language. The target language necessary for this activity are: body parts (nose, eyes, ears, arms, teeth, head, etc.); adjectives (long, short, tall, curly, big, small); colors and numbers. These subjects are listed on my syllabus during weeks 5 through 7. If students have this language fairly well mastered, then you can have them work in pairs. Students are seated with their backs to one another, one with a set of colored pencils and a drawing pad, and the other with a picture of a character that they have to describe to the other student. You can use any type of picture for them to work with, and sometimes the more outrageous a character the more fun they have with it—a green alien with three heads and different types of facial hair for instance—or you might use characters from popular culture, Shaquille O'Neal, Miss Piggy, Big Bird, etc. Students always enjoy seeing how close they come in the drawing compared to the original picture.

Living Sentence

This activity is a good way to get students up and out of their chairs while learning. The teacher chooses several sentences targeting vocabulary or verb forms that they want their students to learn. Each word of the sentence is put on an index card and as the words are called out, students holding those cards form themselves into a sentence. Gwich'in verbs can be quite complex, and I have used this activity with students forming themselves into the prefixes that conjugate Gwich'in verbs. This would work well for first, second, and third person, singular and plural, conjugation of different verb types.

Songs

Songs can be useful for language learning. Students are able to remember a tune very easily, and they can pick up the language because they are willing to sing a line over and over, while not feeling like a drill. I have used a song to open each class, and it has the effect of calming everyone and preparing the mind for learning. Lyrics can be simple, and self-composed by the teacher depending on what they want their students to learn. The tune can be anything, from familiar pop tunes, to something maybe more culturally specific to target language.

Dialogue Journal

A good strategy for incorporating learner viewpoints in the classroom is through the use of dialogue journals. This easy to use tool is an invaluable resource for the teacher wanting to create a learner-centered classroom. There are things students will share in journals that they will not share in an open classroom, and journals also allow a teacher to have a conversation with students. I would definitely use dialogue journals in the future. The conversations that happened in these journals between my students and I often informed how the class proceeded.

Dialogue journals can be structured a number of different ways. Students can dialogue with the teacher in these journals, with the teacher responding daily or weekly to student journal entries. Students can also dialogue with each other, with the teacher occasionally becoming a part of the conversation to give feedback. A teacher can leave the students to write whatever is on their mind that day, or they can give suggested topics. I was interested in how students were receiving the instruction, so I asked them to focus on the day's lessons, what they liked and what they felt worked or did not work. Below is an excerpt of a dialogue with a student (Lidii T'an) early on as I had them choose Gwich'in names for themselves.

L: My name is Kheegwaak'ik, it means "chatterbox"

A: I thought you might pick that name when I was looking through the book.

It's a fun name. Mahsi' Choo ~Allan

L: When introducing myself should I say Lidii Kheegwaak'ik T'an or just

Kheegwaak'ik? Thanks

A: It depends. In some situations you might give full name, other times it's less formal.

L: Ah huht, Maschi Choo. Good class, I learned a lot.

A: Aha', Aha', Mahsi' Choo Kheegwaak'ik.

L: I am looking forward to class this semester. We should make Gwich'in names for everybody. That would be cool. I would say that I still remember some of the things we learned from this past summer.

A: I am glad to see you back in the classroom. You're a bright presence and a help to others' learning. I want to find Gwich'in names for everyone. Mahsi' choo – gwiinzii adak'antii.

Lidii T'an was a bright and positive presence in the classroom. Lidii T'an was in a class I had taught the previous summer for Upward Bound. Her friends helped her pick out the name Kheegwaak'ik (Chatterbox) for the class, which they felt was a good match for her personality.

Ndaalahch'yaa was a good sounding board for different activities I was trying in the classroom. Ndaalahch'yaa often had suggestions or feedback about things that were happening in the classroom, and her insight was useful to me as a teacher.

N: Today was a pretty chill day. Juk drin shoo ihlii. Juk drin vah tr'ishoolchi'

A: Shan t'ee shoo ihlii! I'm working on being more "chill" as a teacher. I get nervous sometimes because I want to teach the right way, but it's better to be chill and relaxed ☺

N: I like the way you're teaching. I think it's mostly the students that ultimately choose to learn or not. It's not you at all. I think we don't really pay attention mostly because other teachers let us text and talk. But I am learning something new everyday and I enjoy learning the language. I am sorry though because I am one who sits and texts but it's mostly to remember what I've learned.

A: I appreciate your efforts in class. I can tell you make an effort when I call on you. Motivation is just slipping in general so I had to talk to the class as a group. Maybe I'll set 5 minutes or 10 to text notes, we'll see. I think maybe if we're not just sitting the whole time but up and doing things it would help. I'm still learning to teach, so I'll try to do different things.

N: Yeah, that sounds good, like taking a walk every once in a while and pointing out things and fly swatter game is always fun too and maybe ice breakers at the end of class if the class participates.

A: Maybe you can teach me the fly swatter game, and I can put the language in. I'll ask you Friday.

N: The fly swatter game was fun but not a lot of people wanted to play. I think it's because it's the last class of the day. Don't mind [REDACTED]. He just is going through stuff. Today's class was fun. [REDACTED] was funny the way he said "I know". I learned that word "gaashandaii".

One of the students was a little withdrawn, and Ndalach'h'yaa was able to let me know some of the background with what was going on with this student. This is something I would

not have known without the dialogue journal, and I might have assumed something else about the situation. Ndalachch'yaa also spoke above about texting and other devices in the classroom. One student had his iPad out and was using it throughout the class. I could have confiscated the iPad, but I decided to allow him to continue doing what he was doing, and after class he had a full set of notes on all the things we were focusing on learning that day.

Summary

I am responsible. I am responsible for everything that happens in my classroom. I am responsible to the Gwich'in speaking community, to my family, to my language and culture, and to my students. I am responsible for myself and for becoming the best teacher I possibly can. I am responsible to be prepared for class, to have materials at the ready for the lessons I have in mind. I am responsible for having an understanding of second language acquisition theories. These theories represent the collective knowledge of the best minds focused on this issue, and inform various methods used in the language classroom. For all these things and more, I am responsible.

My ultimate hope is one day our Gwich'in language will thrive once again, and our young people will learn to speak and make the language their own. I do not like the direction I see things heading, but I believe we can make a difference to change the direction. I had no idea when I began this journey just what I was getting myself into. But now as I am looking back, it was worth all the sleepless nights, simply because the things I have learned about myself, my language, and my culture are invaluable. Sometimes we set off down a path not knowing exactly where we are going, maybe where we are going is not a place, but rather an idea or a state of being. We might be pursued by ghosts, or followed silently by a patient

teacher, but eventually we find that the journey has transformed us, and nothing we thought when we started out is ever the same again. Mahsi' Choo.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Assent Form

Assent Form

Tl'oo Thal: Investigating the Role of Drama and Storytelling
In a High School Gwich'in Language Classroom

IRB #208285-1

Date Approved pending

Description of the Study:

I am asking you to be part of a research study about teaching Gwich'in. I want to learn better ways to teach Gwich'in. I am asking you to be in this study because you are in the Gwich'in language class at Effie Kokrine Charter School. This study is part of my Master of Arts research at UAF. Please read this form and ask any questions before you agree to be in the study.

As part of the class you will:

- a) keep a daily journal about learning Gwich'in
- b) create a Gwich'in language podcast
- c) work together on an iMovie storytelling project

If you are in the study I will **also**:

- d) record the class on video tape twice during the course of the semester
- e) interview you at the end of the semester
- f) include your class work in my research

You have to complete the regular class work for your grade, but being in the study is your choice. Everything we do for the study will happen during our regular class time. If you are in the study, your class, the observation and the interview will help me better understand my teaching.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study: It is important to understand good ways to teach Gwich'in. You might at first feel a little nervous about being video taped, or answering questions about your learning. However, people usually get used to sharing their thoughts and to being on camera.

It is possible you may feel uncomfortable answering interview questions. It is ok not to answer any of the questions.

I hope this study will help future learners and teachers of Gwich'in. We do not guarantee that you personally will benefit from being in this study. There will be no cost to you.

Confidentiality:

I might use the data from this study in reports, presentations, and publications, but I will not use your real name. Any video tapes or interviews will only be seen by me and my professors. All data will be locked in my office.

At the end of the study, I will keep the data.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: It is your decision to be in the study. Even if you decide to take part in the study now, you can change your mind later. You can tell me anytime to remove you

from the study or any part of it. No matter what you decide, now or later, nothing will happen to you as a result. Your decision will not change your grade in this class.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions now, feel free to ask. If you have questions later, you may contact:

Allan Hayton (researcher)
306e Brooks Building UAF
Fairbanks, AK 99775
907-474-6587
ahayton@alaska.edu

or

Sabine Siekmann (faculty sponsor)
306c Brooks Building UAF
Fairbanks, AK 99775
907-474-6580
ssiekmann@alaska.edu

Any Concerns:
Office of Research Integrity
P.O. Box 757270
Fairbanks, AK 99775
907-474-7800
fyori@uaf.edu

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the UAF Office of Research Integrity at 474-7800 (Fairbanks area) or 1-866-876-7800 (toll-free outside the Fairbanks area) or fyirb@uaf.edu.

Statement of Assent:

I know what this study is about and my questions have been answered. I want to be part of this study.

Printed Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX B: Consent Form

Parental Consent Form

Th'oo Thal: Investigating the Role of Drama and Storytelling
In a High School Gwich'in Language Classroom

IRB #208285-1

Date Approved pending

Description of the Study:

I am asking permission for your child to be part of a research study about teaching Gwich'in. I want to learn better ways to teach Gwich'in. I am asking your child to be in this study because he or she is in the Gwich'in language class at Effie Kokrine Charter School. This study is part of my Master of Arts research at UAF. Please read this form and ask any questions before you agree for your child to be in the study.

As part of the class your child will:

- g) keep a daily journal about learning Gwich'in
- h) create a Gwich'in language podcast
- i) work together on an iMovie storytelling project

If your child is in the study I will also:

- j) record the class on video tape twice during the course of the semester
- k) interview your child at the end of the semester
- l) include their class work in my research

Your child will have to complete the regular class work for their grade, but being in the study is theirs and your choice. Everything we do for the study will happen during regular class time. If your child is in the study, their class work, the observation and the interview will help me better understand my teaching.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study: It is important to understand good ways to teach Gwich'in. Your child might at first feel a little nervous about being video taped, or answering questions about their learning. However, people usually get used to sharing their thoughts and to being on camera.

It is possible they may feel uncomfortable answering interview questions. It is ok not to answer any of the questions.

I hope this study will help future learners and teachers of Gwich'in. We do not guarantee that your child will personally benefit from being in this study. There will be no cost to you or your child.

Confidentiality:

I might use the data from this study in reports, presentations, and publications, but I will not use their real name. Any video tapes or interviews will only be seen by me and my professors. All data will be locked in my office.

At the end of the study, I will keep the data.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: It is your decision to allow your child to be in the study. Even if you decide to take part in the study now, you can change your mind later. You can tell me anytime to remove your child from the study or any part of it. No matter what you decide, now or later, nothing will happen to your child as a result. This decision will not change their grade in this class.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions now, feel free to ask. If you have questions later, you may contact:

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Any Concerns:

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If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the UAF Office of Research Integrity at 474-7800 (Fairbanks area) or 1-866-876-7800 (toll-free outside the Fairbanks area) or fyirb@uaf.edu.

Statement of Parental or Guardian Consent:

I know what this study is about and my questions have been answered. I want my child to be part of this study.

Printed Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX C: Sample Lesson Plan 1

Allan Hayton
Beginning Gwich'in

Context: Family

Date: January 4, 2011

Mastery Objective: Students will be able to introduce themselves in Gwich'in

Related Standard: Listening, speaking

Introduce key vocabulary for the semester "Shik'it t'iinyaa" "Say it like me"

Activities:

Warm Up: Instructor introduces self to each student and has them repeat after
"Shik'it t'iinyaa."

Main: Students go round robin "Shoozhri' _____ oozhii. Noozhri' doozhii?"

2nd round: Students introduce self, neighbor to right, and ask what is your name?

Shoozhri' _____ oozhii. Voozhri' _____ oozhii. Noozhri' doozhii?

Closing: Review key words

Homework: Prepare presentation for the next day, in which students will introduce themselves and where they are from.

Materials/Lecture Notes: Family Tree Diagram

Checking for Understanding/Assessment: If they can successfully introduce themselves then they have completed the assignment

Reflection: Easy introduction, nothing motivates like success, students will hopefully be engaged and excited to begin the semester of learning ahead

APPENDIX D: Sample Lesson Plan 2

Teacher: Allan Hayton
Date: February 2, 2011

Class: Beginning Gwich'in

Class/Topic:

Objectives/Concepts

Students will be able to: learn 4 nouns, and possess in first, second, and third person. learn about noun possession rules

Content:

Resources

Materials

Pictures

Props

Dry Erase

Board

Vocabulary

Khal

Ts'eh

Thal

Lqii

Shrii

Sh-

N-

V-

Language:

Jii aii jidii? What is this?

Jii juu vats'an? Whose is this?

Features

Preparation	Integration of Process	Scaffolding	Application	Grouping	Assessment
X Adaption of Content	X Reading	X Modeling	X Hands-on	X Whole class	Individual
Links to Background	X Writing	X Guided Practice	X Meaningful	Small groups	Group
Links to Past Learning	X Speaking	Independent Practice	linked to objectives	Partners	Written
Strategies incorporated	X Listening	X Comprehensible Input	Promotes engagement	Independent	Oral

Standards

Activities/Process

Review/Reflections

Introduce vocabulary for today's lesson using props and pictures.

Pass prop to student and have them repeat phrase, then pass prop to the next student.

After each prop has made it around the room, hold up random props and ask students to say the name.

Introduce possessed form for the class. Work with one student at a time, then move on to the next one.

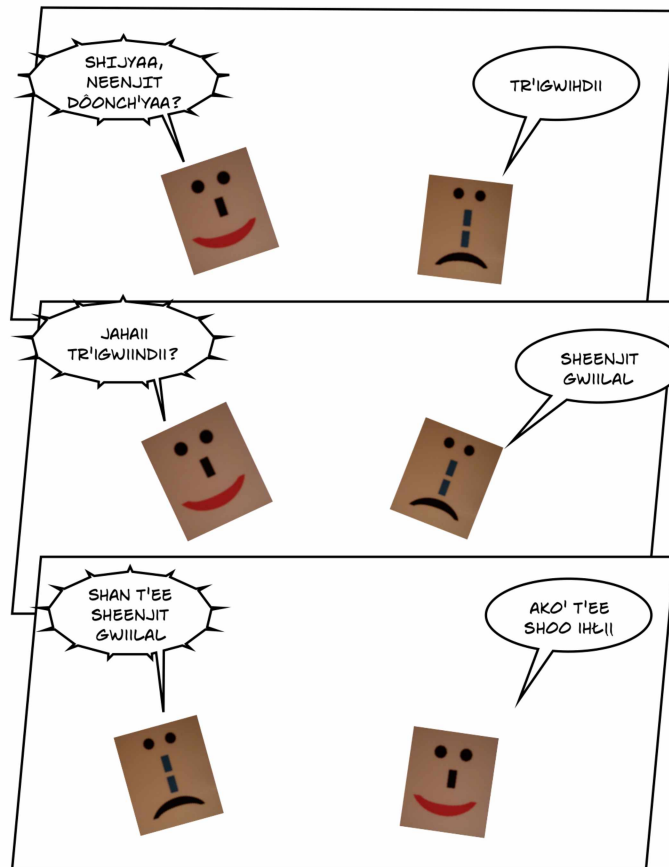
First, second and third person possession.

Explain noun possession rules, then have students work in pairs to finish worksheet.

Learning Strategies

____ TPR
 ____ LDM
 ____ CIM
 ____ Other

APPENDIX E: Emoticons



Vah Tr'ishoolchi'
I Am Sleepy



Tr'igwihdii
I Am Sad



Shoo Ihlji
I Am Happy



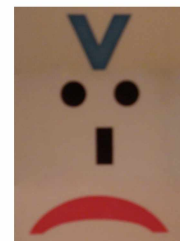
Lafoo Ihlji
I Am Goofy



Naljat
I Am Afraid

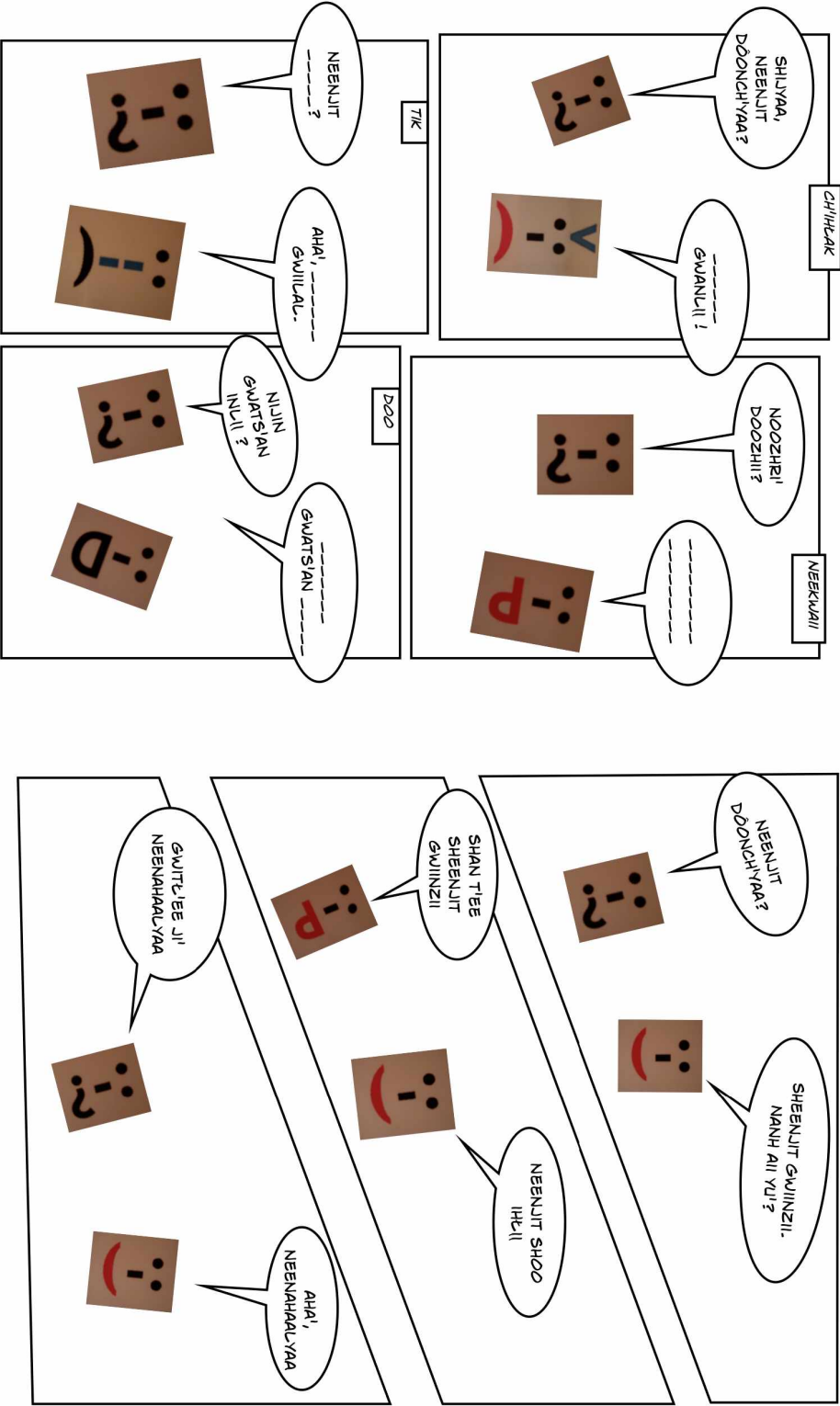


Shoo Ihlji Kwaa
I Am Not Happy



Shik'ii Gwanlji
I Am Angry

APPENDIX F: Comic Life Review Sheet



Gwich'in I

Grade: 9-12	Overview: This course provides an introduction to the speech patterns, reading, writing, and culture of Gwich'in speaking peoples. Students will participate in hands-on activities that reflect the culture and the values of Gwich'in speaking people.
Length: 2 semesters	
Prerequisites: None	

Themes	Mastery Core Objectives	Grammar/ Usage/Structure Students will be introduced to the following concepts:
Listening AK. Content Standards: WL.A.1; B.3	Students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand the basic patterns of sound production and intonations as they differ from English understand words, expressions, and simple sentences: statements, questions, and commands understand simple stories when read at a pace slower than that of a native speaker comprehend basic courtesies and cultural formalities understand simple questions, brief conversations, and basic requests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use appropriate verb forms in present tense use appropriate nouns, adjectives, and articles to agree with nouns differentiate between subjects and objects form use correct word order in simple sentences use correct structure in communication
Speaking AK. Content Standards: WL.A.2-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produce sounds, individual words, simple sentences in Gwich'in, using adequate pronunciation and intonation communicate simple messages which can be understood by the listener communicate basic needs and engage in simple transactions in familiar situations produce simple questions and participate in brief conversations 	
Reading AK. Content Standards: WL.A.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand simple messages and stories in Gwich'in read short passages limited to familiar vocabulary and structure 	
Writing AK. Content Standards: WL.A.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> know how to write simple sentences using correct spelling and acceptable word order write about self, family, activities and interests 	
Culture AK. Content Standards: WL.B.2-4,6; C.1,4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase the understanding of one's own language and culture explore the role of Gwich'in language and culture within Alaska and how it relates to other Athabaskan languages recognize some important aspects of daily life and traditions in the Athabaskan culture understand some aspects of non-verbal communication in the Athabaskan culture know basic geographic data concerning villages where Gwich'in is spoken review selected current events taking place in Athabaskan country (e.g. subsistence debates, etc.) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand the relationship between language and culture interact appropriately in multilingual environments apply language skills and cultural knowledge to enhance personal, intellectual, and social growth 	

APPENDIX H: Advisory Board Letter

Allan Hayton
 MA applied linguistics student
 University of Alaska Fairbanks
 December 13, 2010

Research Description

Hello,

Shoozhri' Diton oozhii. Vashraii K'oo gwats'an ihlii. Juk it'ee UAF hee school altsii, ts'a' shi-MA eenjit tr'agwal'in. My name is Allan Hayton, I am Gwich'in Athabascan from Arctic Village, and I am working towards my MA in applied linguistics at UAF. I am sorry I can't be present at the meeting this evening, but it coincides with my last class meeting this semester.

I have been in talks with Principal Linda Evans about teaching Gwich'in language in the spring 2011 semester at Effie Kokrine. I am excited about the possibilities we have been discussing. I am also hoping to do data collection for my thesis while teaching at Effie. This data collection would involve me keeping a daily journal recording events in the classroom. This journal will be my own reflections about myself as a teacher (what worked, what did not work, what I might do better, and how it all relates to theories of second language acquisition), but could also involve discussion about "student A", "student B", etc. Participation by students is voluntary, and will not affect their grade one way or the other. UAF will be conducting a full review of the IRB proposal I submit for this research to ensure that the research design, and data collection methods are sound and will be conducted responsibly. The IRB is described fully on the UAF website: <http://www.uaf.edu/irb/>

I am currently working on a more detailed research proposal including my research

questions, data collection and data analysis procedures. I would be glad to discuss this proposal, and answer any questions you may have, at your next advisory board meeting.

Thank you very much, Mahsi' Choo

~Allan J. Hayton

Digital Storytelling Rubric				
Evaluation		Needs Improvement	Good	Excellent
Criterion				
L A N G U A G E 5 0 %	Pronunciation	Ok pronunciation, could use more work handling glottal and plain consonants.	Good pronunciation, needs small improvement in handling glottal and plain consonants.	Excellent pronunciation and handles glottal and plain consonants well.
	Fluency	Demonstrated little fluency and needs more work in this area to help the flow of the language.	Demonstrated good fluency but could still use some focus in the flow of the language.	Demonstrated excellent fluency and had a good flow of the language, needs little work in this area.
	Audibility	The project contains fair -quality audio narration that could be improved with additional effort.	The project contains good -quality audio narration that can be clearly heard and understood.	The project contains excellent high-quality audio narration that can be clearly heard and understood.
	Overall	Put minimal effort into project, and did not complete assignment in timely manner.	Put good effort into project, and completed assignment in timely manner.	Put extra effort into project, and completed assignment in timely manner.
Pictures/Images 30%		Demonstrate average proficiency creating or finding images that enhance and expand the story. Minimal use of technology.	Demonstrate good proficiency creating or finding images that enhance and expand the story, and made good use of technology.	Demonstrate excellent proficiency creating or finding images that enhance and expand the story, and mastered use of technology.
Music/Subtitling. 10%		Music could be improved to complement the content of the project. Minimal use of technology. Did not add subtitles.	Good use of music that complemented the content of the project, and made good use of technology. Matched close the subtitles to narration.	Excellent use of music that perfectly complemented the content of the project, and mastered use of technology. Matched very close subtitles to narration.
Peer Feedback 10%				

APPENDIX J: Student Journal Sample

J: Although I'm super tired and exhausted from the sudden homework after two weeks I was excited to be here. All the rest of my classes today was just like "here's some paper, do your homework". But the Gwich'in class makes my day. Also because I wouldn't be all tired and go home and crash but instead end the day with fun.

I know what some people are talking about. I grew up back and forth from the village to the city. But I have been around it and grew up around it. Mostly from my grandmother and father. I already know some words and how to introduce myself. I just need to add in my parents and grandparents and where they're from.

A: I'm glad you added this class. It's going to be a good class and we will all learn a lot together. Mahsi' choo, gwiinzii adak'antii. ~Diton

J: Gwich'in name: Little Snow Bird? My aunt knows which snow bird, just got to get it tonight.

A: I'm glad you're asking questions and finding answers It's the point of the class and life. Mahsi' ~Allan

1/6/11

J: I learned today how to properly say my Gwich'in name and ask where and who the person is. I also learned this while time I been saying where I'm from kind of wrong. So I learned more than I expected today. Also hopefully by tomorrow I would know my Gwich'in name. One question I have is when will we start learning how to say our parents, where they're from and our grandparents, and where they're from? Other than that thank you

A: We will be going to family next, starting with self. More and more of the language will be revealed. Keep up the good work.

1/7/11

J: Again, I had fun in class even though there was a pep rally going on. I stayed mainly because I thought it would be disrespectful to up and leave. Also why would I want to go and see people shoot baskets and scream their heads off?

I'm really excited to start learning songs. My late grandmother used to sing the "Sweet By and By" song to sleep. Back then I also used to know it. But since I moved and she passed I forgot. So I am really excited to learn songs.

A: I think we will learn more songs. It will be good for learning language. I miss my grandmother too. She loved Takudh songs. That really took me by surprise having a pep rally, I could tell most of the class wanted to go. I was surprised anyone shoes to stay in class. It made me happy, but also didn't know what to do. ☺ Live & Learn, Mahsi' Choo!

1/12/11

J: Finally! I know how to say my parents' names! Haha I been wanting to to learn for so long. Thank you!

APPENDIX K: Sample Teacher Journal

January 4, 2011 Tuesday Today was the first day of class. I spent the morning prepping for the class, and tried to get everything done well ahead. I was very nervous. I think it went relatively well, but could have been more confident. It is so nerve wracking. I introduced myself and where I'm from then I went and asked the class what their names were. Most were able to catch on. I have a few students who took a class with me last summer. It was only a three-week class that met 4 times a week.

January 5, 2011 Wednesday We reviewed names, and where we were from. Some of the class already have Gwich'in names and others not. I brought a book of Gwich'in names for students to look through and choose a Gwich'in name. We ran out of time before everyone could choose a name.

January 6, 2011 Thursday I had the students look through the book again and choose names. One student's friends chose a name for her "Kheegwaak'ik" (chatterbox). I had two students choose Nahtryah (Wolverine), and two choose Naazu' (pretty face). One student who chose Naazu' was so painfully shy, so I asked the other if she would be ok with Neenahot'ii (butterfly). She was agreeable. I explained that another student had chose Naazu', and XXXX thought Neenahot'ii would be a good name for her since she was very much a social butterfly. The other students who chose Nahtryah, one was more suited to that name, so I suggested Shoh Kwai' for the other student. Thankfully everyone was agreeable to the compromises. I think I am going to enjoy working with these students, they are a great bunch of kids. Another student thought her name meant a bird of some sort, but wasn't sure. She said it was a Navajo name. I asked her to find out. Another student said his name was First Light, but wasn't sure. He said he would find out. . I wrote up on the board some high frequency words or expressions we might use in class. Things like "come here, say it louder, repeat after me, again, stand up, sit down", etc. I put out a piece of butcher paper and asked the students to come up and write anything at all they wanted to know how to say in Gwich'in. I thought this would go very well, but only 4 students wrote anything. The others stayed glued to their seats. I didn't expect this reaction. I imagined it going very smoothly. I was not able to get them to open up even in a small way. I also felt like maybe I was rushing through different lessons. I need to slow things way down and simplify what I am trying to teach them. They need to understand what I am asking them to do.

January 7, 2011 Friday Today I had plans to have the class sit in a circle and review each other's Gwich'in names. As soon as I got them in a circle an announcement came over the loud speakers about a pep rally going on in the gym. Attendance of the pep rally was up to the teachers. I tried to keep the students in class, but I could tell that they were really not there. I asked the class who really wanted to go to the pep rally, and a bunch of hands went up. I asked if anyone wanted to stay in class, and one person kind of raised their hand. I let the students go. I turned and was packing my stuff to leave as well, and when I turned around there were still three students sitting there. Later another student returned from the pep rally. So I ended up with four students that day. I was not sure what to do with them, so I was honest and explained what I had planned, and how it might not work with this small a group, but we would do our best. I was really wishing I had some sort of back up plan. I asked them what did they really want to learn in Gwich'in. They weren't too talkative as we sat in the circle. I think that maybe they are still shy around me. We ended up looking at different colors, and I showed them first second and third person singular and plural. There was still a good amount of time left and I didn't want to have them learning things too much ahead of the rest of the class, so I pulled out some Takudh Chilig. I wrote out the first verse of Chilig 18 on the board and we sang it together, one line at a time.